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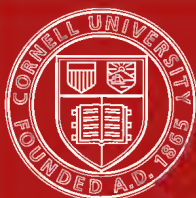
**Myth and legend in the Bible.**



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## MYTH AND LEGEND IN THE BIBLE



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# MYTH AND LEGEND IN THE BIBLE

BY  
KEIGHLEY SNOWDEN

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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THIS is a book for ordinary readers. As a journalist, I have tried to make its story as plain and interesting as anything in the newspapers.

The facts it contains will come as a great surprise to many people ; but this is not because they are new knowledge—it is only because they have not been popularized. Though you may find them in the Home University Library and the People's Books, which two firms of publishers sell cheaply, one must be a student to dig them out.

The truth about the Bible, a popular book, ought not to be so technically told.

K. S.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE DAWN OF HEBRAISM

THE growth of that ancient body of literature out of which the Bible was to be gradually formed makes a story so romantic and significant, and has had such consequences for humanity, that unexampled interest attaches to it.

/ At the outset of any literary study of this literature, however simple, it is necessary to cast back one's mind among a primitive society, and to realize the limited conceptions of another race than our own. This race was emerging from savagery in an age when religion had no such meaning as it has to-day. It is therefore not enough to remember that men were ignorant of much that explorers and scholars have since found out with reference to their origins and actual history ; that there was little scholarship, and this extremely narrow and simple ; or that men were, of course, unable to think and write outside the field of their own development and experience. Imagination is required. It is important to enter into the minds of men for whom the dawn of religious ideas was still clouded by the more ancient belief in magic, by the concurrent dawn of a barbarous patriotism, and by a dark and curious past of oriental civilizations. No man to whom all this is strange can make at once the

due allowances and readjustments. He can only apply them as he reads.

It is comparatively easy to imagine the manner in which the Jews began to have a literature ; for this was not very different from that of our own literature's beginnings.

Some two hundred years after the reign of Solomon they had pieced together old stories told among them and a priestly code of laws. But the writing of such stories, and of occasional songs that celebrated great events, began soon after Solomon's time. The wish to compile some account of the national origins then was natural, because in the reign of Solomon the Jews had come to feel that they were a people of real importance in the small world they knew. Before that of David they had been only groups of Semitic tribes, or clans ; and they had settled so gradually in Canaan, after a series of interrupted campaigns and repulses, as to be very like the English peoples before the time of Alfred, or rather of Knut. But David had united them, as Knut united all England ; and Solomon had enriched the capital city of Jerusalem—little larger than some English villages of to-day—with a certain eastern luxury, though with no such luxury as legend imputed to him later.

There is a first surprise, no doubt, in finding that we have to reckon mainly with later writings. So many have been ascribed to him and David. But the fact must be grasped at once that this literature, like every other, broadened out from slender sources, and that there is no trace of these prior to the post-Solomonic epoch. The little

newly-formed nation did not at once become self-conscious, or sufficiently quiet for literary labours. And these were at first naïve. They could not be inspired by anything like a modern conception of history. They dealt with legend, myth, or poetry, comparable to the earlier tales of King Arthur's Court ; and we have to be prepared for the mistakes and fancies of that kind of lore.

The surprise, indeed, is due only to preconceptions formed in ignorance of the circumstances.

It was David, and not Joshua, whose wars established the settlers, after a century of incessant turmoil. It is true that some of the tribes appear to have gained a precarious footing as far back as 200 years before his time ; for Professor Flinders Petrie found at Karnak an inscription stating that a little before 1200 B.C.—*i.e.*, before the famous Exodus—an Egyptian army had harried " Israel " in Canaan itself. But nothing else is known of that primal occupation of the country, then mainly Phœnician ; and Canaan did not become definitely Jewish until a much later date. It had still to be conquered from the south and east, and a century may have been required for all the tribes to come in and settle, and for the resistance made by older civilizations on all sides to tire.

Briefly, the history of Jewish literature as its remains are found in the Old Testament may be stated as follows.

The earliest chroniclers were priests. Probably no other class of men could write Hebrew. Solomon had built a new temple for them—a lordly little chapel-royal ; and they had more than one reason for compiling records that should preserve

to future generations what was currently told of the stormy times during which the progeny of Jacob had come to recognize a national deity.

Not only was their religion strictly patriotic—that is to say, not personal. Not only had the kingdom been again divided in spite of that. The temple priests at Jerusalem on the one hand, and at Samaria on the other, were established in a land devoted largely to the worship of other gods; and they were by no means agreed between themselves. The two kingdoms had different legends, different usages, and a different image of the god; who was not the Creator of the world, not even the stern all-righteous deity conceived as time went by, much less the God of Hosea or of modern Christianity; but a hill deity associated with the fortunes of the tribes just as household gods had been with those of families and clans.

The national story was diversely and casually begun. It was not until the fall of Samaria, three centuries later, that anything more was attempted than a fortuitous assemblage of legends; and the Babylonian Exile had to follow, with all the change it made in men's ideas, before five or six early books were produced by a deliberate act of authorship, combining the legends with much that had been vaguely recollected in captivity.

New books were compiled or adopted by the priests from this time almost to the Christian era, as events gave new impulses and modified ideas. Generally they were adopted. There was most creative faculty outside the priestly body—among the people, and particularly the verse-writing followers of prophets.



Now, the order in which books appear in our Bible is not that of their production. It is misleading and confusing. Moreover, almost every one of them was frequently re-edited and supplemented. While the bulk of this literature belongs to a period within four hundred or five hundred years of Christianity, it seems, and was undoubtedly supposed, to be older. For the names put to the books, when proper names entitled them, were never those of their authors, who can rarely be rescued from the obscurity of an age when authors were not, vain and the books were never dated. It is also to be realized that re-editing was undertaken from time to time, not with a view to make this literature more accurate as history—the attempt to write true history is very modern ; but for teaching purposes, to keep pace with the growth of religious ideas. Its critical examination must obviously be an affair of the highest skill. Moreover, the oldest existing manuscript containing any part of it dates only from the second century *after* Christ ; and the manuscript from which our Old Testament is copied was made three centuries later.

These facts are no longer disputed. The critical labours of many scholars—German, French, English, and American—have patiently established them. Similar facts about the New Testament have been established also. They wholly change, of course, old conceptions of the Bible.

The truth about this ancient literature is full of fascination. It lights up a wonderful past. The way in which scholars have worked upon it resembles the excavations made at Nineveh and Knossos,

where one stratum was found beneath another until the very oldest civilization lay revealed. But the work was much more delicate, much finer. Minutest touches of successive editors have been recognized, the composite books parcelled out, every part and modification traced to its motive and its own period nearly, the true order found, the growth of ideas distinguished. A convincing story emerges, dream figures come to life. They are not what they seemed to be ; men are such stuff as dreams are made of, but are not what they dream ; and this literature, the most passionate and superstitious the world knows, and hitherto the most perplexing, proves to be touchingly naïve. But the gain for modern minds is incalculable.

## CHAPTER II

### BEFORE THE BOOK-MAKING

THE tribes which came together to form the Jewish people had long been partly civilized by a great Power of their own Semitic race to which they had belonged more or less loosely. They were border tribes of Babylonia, earlier called Chaldea. Egypt had but lately oppressed some of them.

We must imagine the duration of that Semitic civilization.

Christianity is not 1,900 years old. When the Karnak inscription was written, the civilization of Chaldea and Babylonia had already lasted more than 700 years longer than Christianity has now lasted. Another inscription, found on a clay cylinder near to its old capital Agadé, older far than Babylon itself, shows that, 2,600 years before the settlement in Canaan, King Sargon the First must have reigned over Chaldea. And he was powerful. The inscription has been interpreted, though doubtfully, to say that his son's armies were on the eastern Mediterranean coast, defending Palestine.

It now seems that a period of 2,600 years is no great span of human history. But, to the Babylonians, their origin as a race appeared to be near the beginning of time. They could imagine little earlier—only gods, and the creation of the world.

Such a period, at all events, is long enough for the spread of ideas over a wide region, among peoples of the same blood. It has been found, accordingly, that the settlers in Canaan shared certain lore current throughout the empire—religious myths, legends, and beliefs—as well as the practices that went with them. This lore was afterwards embodied in their sacred books, and so came down to our own day.

Let us look back to the Babylonian civilization and see what it was, psychologically.

Priests controlled it. They not only represented the gods and interceded with them for a highly credulous people, but gave oracles to the kings themselves. They were the civil administration, so far as justice was concerned. They were the only learned class. And so superstitious were they and their fellow-countrymen, so anxious about the gods' favour, that fortune-telling was a system with them. They had libraries of omen-texts. Every smallest accident of a man's life—a bird crossing his path, a dog seen from his door, dry rot in his table—meant something bad or good in his future, which they foretold from these libraries. They were also astrologers and interpreters of dreams.

The gods were numerous. Every city and town had one of its own, and so had every household. If a misfortune befel the city or the house, it was a sure sign that the god was angry ; and his anger was to be turned away by sacrifices—cattle, sheep, lambs, other sorts of food, and, in later times, precious stones and metals. Nature in all its aspects—light and fire, storm and darkness, spring

and the fertile womb—was the work of separate deities. The chief earth god was Bel. Their images were animals or monsters, but they had the passions of mankind.

The myths and legends of Babylonia included those of the creation and the deluge, which we know in another form. They included many, besides, of which in Hebrew writings we have only fragments. There is one so old that it appears in the folk-lore of other races, as some of them do; it relates to Sargon of Agadé. His mother was said to have set him floating on the Euphrates in a chest of reeds smeared with bitumen; but Akki the irrigator rescued him; and while he was serving his benefactor as a gardener the goddess Ishtar loved him, and gave him at last the rule of the kingdom.

Legends, ever forming, filled the place of history. But the facts we know, preserved without intention on countless tablets and cylinders, enable us to see this ancient race clearly, as no later Jewish scribe, unacquainted with the ruins in which they were buried, could have pictured it from tradition and imagination.

Now, tradition as it varies, and imagination as it plays upon tradition, are always shaping the beliefs of primitive men. So it was with those of the settlers. The respect for facts and the love of facts are modern, and not at all general even now. It will be important to keep this in mind. Conversely, beliefs shape the legends. So do race pride, race hostility, and many sincere unbalanced motives. Such legends grow about the names and memories of famous men, about big events,

about natural phenomena that are at all unusual ; and their character is determined by the fact that minds not used to test and verify things, as ours are more or less, tend to believe what is marvelous, not what is true. Imagination also works unchecked ; each man may add a little to the story ; and so, none knowing how, the legend is built up magnificently, a fabric the novelist could scarce devise. It is then imposing. Who, men may ask, could have thought of such a story if it were not true ? It is so imposing that, by people who have no story-books to entertain them, it cannot be forgotten soon.

If, however, we compare the legends of Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, and Wales with those of Norway, a remarkable difference in their quality strikes us. The former, on the whole, are much the more fanciful and poetic, as well as the more superstitious. Some of the latter seem to be savagely true. The legends of a race express its spirit as clearly as anything we know about it.

The Babylonish border clans had their own legends—stories of tribal heroes. Bits of them appear in what comes down about the “patriarchs.” There is no sign that they had many, and there are signs of a peaceful early life which may account for this. In any case, the wars of colonization set up new heroes—Moses, Joshua, and Joseph. They set new legends forming. It will be part of our study to see what truth the great legends of those heroes may contain.

For the moment it is enough to note two things about them ; first, that, when taken into the temple records at Jerusalem, they had had hundreds of

years in which to grow ; second, that, superseding others, they made the Jews for a time forget Shinar (another name for Chaldea), where Noah and all the generations after him were said by tradition to have lived. The newer legends had had time to grow, and we shall see them still growing ; for they did not cease to grow when put in writing. Legends are crystals from the mind of a people. When tested by the chemistry of criticism they vaporize, leaving, perhaps, some sediment of fact. But it is the mind of the people that concerns us.

The early Jewish mind, then, was the Babylonian mind. The settlers had local gods and household gods, like the "teraphim" stolen by Rachel ; and such household gods may have even become tribal gods. The settlers were not, however, townsmen. In their days of "wandering in the wilderness" they would have no very formal priests and no elaborate practices of augury.

But one of the most curious triumphs of scholarship has changed our notions of that wandering. It is shown to have been, not a miraculous and conquering march out of Egypt, but just one of those migratory movements, more or less slow and natural, of which the history of peoples is full the world over. A fighting race takes possession of richer lands after long conflicts, and then moves on to lands still richer. The "forty years" of the Moses legend is folklore. That number forty, whether of years or days, occurs often in this eastern literature, and simply means an uncertain period ; it was one of many symbolic numbers that served before our days of greater accuracy. As

the settlement took long, so did the previous "sojourn" in a hilly and wild country, doubtless. All the tribes are not to be imagined as nomads living in tents. Men's names and place-names, in many connections, make it clear that at least a group of them, the most influential, had settled first not in Canaan, the "land of milk and honey," but in that wild and hilly country. By some scholars, Mount Horeb has been identified there, in the region called Missur or Musri; and it is just possible that the word Moses meant Musrite.

In this Arabian region of the south the legend and all good evidence agree that Yahwe was worshipped; and Yahwe was to be the fighting god of Israel.

It has been an age-long error to suppose that, from the beginning, the Jewish people adored an almighty maker of a heaven and earth. The priest-made and translated Bible seems to state this in its first sentence. They had, indeed, heard of such a god, but he was not Yahwe. In the Babylonish story of creation he was Marduk (Merodach), who is the same as Bel. It will appear, as the facts are bared, that the Jewish idea of God as we have it was formed very slowly; and Hebrew scholars who have sifted all this early lore recognize that the god Yahwe, whose name we know better as Jehovah, was but one of the many local gods of the Semitic race. Just as the town-dwellers had gods who were believed to inhabit their own temples, and to control the worldly fortunes of the townsfolk, so these simple country-folk had a god whose place was a mountain peak. Hill deities are not uncommon in nature worship.



They are gods of the wind, the cloud, and the storm. And the name Yahwe indicates the stormy powers of the god whose law-giver was believed after the Exile to have been Moses. It is not in the earliest traditions that this name is said more awfully to mean "I am that I am"; and it is a still later priestly writing that says this name was revealed for the first time to that religious hero, as if he had then proclaimed a new god instead of the alleged "god of the fathers."

Whatever happened in Musri, it is clear that Yahwe was not the god of all the fathers for long after. He may, indeed, have been worshipped first of all by older hill-folk, the Kenites, who entered Canaan with the tribe of Judah. There was to be much fighting and the birth of a new civilization, before this god and the laws proclaimed in his name prevailed.

The greatest of the other gods were two known to all Babylonians—Bel and Ishtar, who in the English Bible are oftenest named Baal and Ashtaroth. Bel was an earth god, Ishtar a goddess of love or fertility. They, too, were adored on hill-tops, but under trees, in "groves"; and the worship included sexual rites. Rahab, who hid the spies of Joshua, was probably a grove harlot. When fornication was condemned by prophets and the priestly authors later, they had in mind rival priests and priestesses with and under whom it was piously practised. Not only sterner morals, but its quasi-religious claim, made it abominable; and it was not to be soon stamped out. Bel and Ishtar, like Adonis, appear to have been gods of the Canaanites (Phoenicians), earlier comers from

Chaldea, whom the settlers never expelled, but mingled with. But, as to Baal, that was a name which had come to signify for the Canaanites any divinity whatever, and not Bel only. It meant lord or owner—that is to say, the god owning the grove or other shrine; and these Phœnicians would speak of Yahwe as the Baal of their conquerors' temples. So there were many kinds of Baals. Adon, too, meant lord.

Now, there seem to have been two main bodies of early legend, assembled in writing long after the settlement. They told some of the stories in different ways.

Their separate existence may have been due to schism, or simply to the fact that the tribes had not fought together, but had fought in raiding expeditions over a long course of years and a wide stretch of country. For, so far as can be learned from the Bible, it appears that the southern kingdom of Judah had been partly settled before the northern kingdom of Israel. In any case, the two kingdoms kept apart with one interval (the reigns of David and Solomon) as long as there were kings to rule them and no great foreign power to make an end of either. In the north the image of Yahwe was a golden bull, disdainfully called by the Judæans a calf. In the south it appears to have been a golden serpent, as in Solomon's temple. Both were old Babylonian symbols, and in Egypt a coiled serpent had been the image of the sun-god. Among the Phœnicians a bull represented Bel and other Baals, while a cow served for Ishtar; and the serpent was Tiamat, the enemy of the light-god in one of the most widely circulated myths.

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The two bodies of legend had much in common. The early temple priests of Yahwe at Jerusalem undertook to reconcile their differences, and failed to do this perfectly.

## CHAPTER III

### HOW SCHOLARS WORK

EVERYONE has heard of "textual criticism" and "historical criticism" in connection with the Bible. The facts already stated have been ascertained or verified by these means. So everyone has heard of chemical laboratories and the differential calculus. But the facts will hardly be accepted unless the ways in which they are got at be understood.

There has been no hesitation—there could be none—in accepting evidence found by archæologists in Palestine, Egypt, and Babylonia. Such evidence is published as it comes to light by the newspapers, because it is quite definite at once, and it interests the man in the street, though he may not know what follows from it. But the evidence found by textual critics is not so published. It is never definite at once, but only after long dispute and agreement, as in a court of justice; and there is no news correspondent waiting to announce this agreement when it is reached. However, the evidence in the text of the Bible itself is by far the most interesting and ample.

How have those who sought it gone to work? What is "textual criticism"?

To illustrate it very simply, let us take an English legend with which we are well acquainted—"The Hunting of the Cheviot." There are two versions of this, one earlier than the other. Suppose

that two hundred years after the second of these ballad versions was made—say at the end of the seventeenth century—they had been welded into one narrative and had come down to us only in that form. Suppose the welding had been done respectfully, without much alteration of the old spelling, by a patriotic clergyman who taught loyalty and peace. Suppose, further, that the story had not been written in lines to mark the rhyme, but straight on; and that, after he had done his work, it had been broken up into prose verses like our Bible. The opening passages of the narrative might run something like this:—

1. God prosper long our noble king, our lives and safeties all.

2. The Persè owt of Northombarlande; and a vowe to God mayd he, that he wolde hunte in the mountayns off Chyviat in the border marches within days thre. This he would do in the mauger of dougtè Dogles and all that ever with him be, although they were fierce armed men that valued not the king's peace.

3. This began in the reign of King James of Scotland.

4. To drive the deere with hound and horne, Erle Percy took his way with many good archers: the child may rue that is unborne the hunting of that day.

Now, see how much the critic might find in such a narrative.

He would note the two spellings of Percy, and how in one case it was "*the Persè*" and in the other "Erle Percy." He would note other double spellings later—"Northombarlande" and "Northumberland," "Dogles" and "Douglas." In such a non-literary blend he would find some details stated twice, perhaps discordantly.

By these signs he could not fail to recognize

that two sources had been drawn upon. In one the hero Persè or Percy would seem to have been a more important figure in the source-author's eyes than in the other, because he was "the" Persè, not just one of a class of titled men; and so it might be suspected that this author lived nearer to the scene of the hunting fight, and possibly nearer to the time of it, than the other did. So the critic would try to disentangle the two sources; and, as soon as he began to see rhymes and rhythm, he would be on the way to do this. Patiently, he would go through the whole narrative and take out the rhyming lines as far as they could be recovered; and then it would not be hard to separate them, for in one version the lines are shorter and crisper than in the other, and this difference agrees with the difference in spelling. The short-lined, crisp, and simply spelled one is the later, evidently.

They would come out like this:—

*Early Version.*

The Persè owt of Northombarlande,  
 And a vowe to God mayd he  
 That he wolde hunt in the mountayns  
 Off Chyviat within dayes thre  
 In the mauger of dougtè Dogles  
 And all that ever with him be.

*Later Version.*

God prosper long our noble king,  
 Our lives and safetyes all

To drive the deere with hound and horne  
 Erle Percy took his way :  
 The child may rue that is unborne  
 The hunting of that day.

Observe, now, what the critical scholar would learn from such an analysis. He would be able not only to set a higher value on the early ballad than on the other, or on the blended narrative, but to look at what remained when the two ballads were taken away, and to see the editor's motive in this remainder. Such an interpolation as this, "although they were fierce armed men that valued not the king's peace," would give him his first clue to it. He would find that the editor's spelling and style were later still, and that he used words which the source-authors did not use, and which had been derived ultimately from the Latin tongue. "Valued" is such a word. In the end he would know for certain that the editor's work had been done long after theirs, and that he had been a man whom the story shocked because he thought loyalty and peace to be duties of good men.

So our critic would turn with a clear mind to the earlier rhymed legend, and try to see what historical worth it had, knowing that ballads do not tell the literal truth, but often do reflect something of it.

From the spelling and style of this he could fix its date not later than the time of Henry VI. "King James of Scotland" would not help him much, because there were three Jameses in Scotland during that time ; but, as the ballad speaks of "old men that knowen the grownde," he would incline to think that the first of them was meant. When he had thoroughly considered the character of this ballad, made so long after the event that men who knew the ground were old, his work would be done ; unless, indeed, some other scholar should

find an old manuscript of "The Battle of Otterburn."

Few persons may be ready to follow the toil of scholarship through many such tangles; but all will believe that similar methods applied by scholars to the whole Bible have involved an immense labour.

This can only be compared for arduousness to the work of men in the natural sciences during recent generations. And it has been far more difficult, and has required far more curious learning, than the earlier literature of our own race would have been and required, if, like "Chevy Chase" in the illustration, it had been preserved only by editors of the seventeenth century who thought it valuable for teaching purposes. The seventeenth century is but yesterday compared to the eighth century before Christ. The Pentateuch, which we have only in a re-edited form, dates as far back from our time as the buried inscription of Sargon's son dated back from the wars of Joshua. For this labour, on the whole Bible, there was required a knowledge of nine dead languages and their dialects, and of the history of each people who spoke them.

However, we shall take great interest as we go in seeing how the results have been reached. Before the myths and primeval legends are set in the new light cast upon them, let us realize broadly what these results are. They tell us how the Bible grew.



## CHAPTER IV

### HOW THE BIBLE GREW

IT has been said that, some two or three hundred years after the reign of Solomon, old stories and a code of laws had been pieced together.

But was there nothing written in or before that reign? What of "The Psalms of David," "The Proverbs of Solomon," "The Song of Solomon"? What is there unreasonable in supposing that, in a reign so glorious and enlightened, such books should have been produced?

Alas, the idea of Solomon in all his glory and wisdom was a notion of men who lived long after him; Solomon, too, is a half-mythical figure. He cannot be likened to King Alfred, who himself wrote books. He is to be conceived as a much more primitive monarch. While David, being a musician, may just possibly have written or composed religious poetry, there is not a scrap of this that can be attributed to him with certainty, or of either poetry or prose to Solomon. As we proceed this will appear plainly. Solomon's titles to fame are simply that he was an enterprising trader in a time of peace; that he lived sumptuously on the proceeds of a commerce with the Phœnicians; that he built a fine house of worship; and that, if we trust a popular tradition which is likely enough to be true, he was a clever judge in civil disputes.

To understand the history of Hebrew literature as it has been traced out in the books themselves, we have now at last to clear our minds of every preconception which ignorance of them had established.

After investigations extending over 250 years, since Spinoza was persecuted for pointing out that Moses did not write five books imputed to him, the broad facts and conclusions which follow are agreed upon by all eminent workers.

The piecing together of old stories and like material may well have begun soon after Solomon's reign, although the books commenced were, as has been said, not finished until two or three centuries later. But these are lost books. They were superseded. Their existence is only known of because parts of them have been disentangled from the Pentateuch and other books of the Bible. It appears, however, that one of these superseded books was made in the southern and the other in the northern kingdom.

What did they contain? There is no clear sign that they included any previous written material. They consisted of just such floating legendary matter as would be available—tales preserved at holy places about Yahwe's appearing to patriarchs, or about sacred stones and usages; tribal and local traditions, afterwards taken into the book of Judges; supposed genealogies that represented clan groupings; a few current laws; myths of native and foreign origin; old songs and fables; and the current stories of three recent reigns—those of Saul, David, and Solomon himself. Perhaps it is misleading to call them books. We shall have

to do so for convenience ; but it must be realized that they were collections of papyrus rolls gradually augmented.

It is not to be supposed that all the legends and other contents were got together energetically or very systematically, because of some new interest felt by men who went about seeking them, as Mr. Cecil Sharp has hunted up old folk-songs and dances. No literature begins in that way. The industrious priests who wrote the first rolls put in what they knew, and after their deaths other scribes would add other rolls of similar matter. Later these might be copied in a single collection with new additions, legends of still longer growth ; and every copyist would prize his own rolls best. Later still the fullest sets of rolls would be most in request, not the earliest ; for, evidently, these simple authors were not historians trying to get at dry facts, but pious enthusiasts.

Just so the earliest scribes of ancient Greece worked. It is abundantly seen in all folklore that men in the first stage of a civilization do not know of a difference between the natural and the supernatural. All is supernatural, because the world is supernaturally governed. How, then, should they make our cold distinctions between authentic history, legendary history, pure legend, and myth ?

The sure signs that these two collections of rolls were made in such a manner are that their contents show no order, and that the combination and enriching of legends has been clumsily done sometimes. As to the lack of order, it must be considered that the use of dates had not been invented.

Next, the collections were united in one, at Jerusalem. This, too, is a lost book.

It probably came to be made because, 500 years after the settlement, the northern kingdom had been ended by the Assyrians. After a siege of three years the capital city, Samaria, had been sacked and many of its inhabitants carried off as slaves in the delightful manner of those days. The kingdom of Israel ceased to be. That of Judah was to last 135 years longer.

In the composite collection there must have been some valuable facts of the kind needed by historians. There was the basis of our unreliable Book of Kings. It is likely that brief palace records had been made as well as temple records. The loss of such a story of the two kingdoms, or rather its supercession by something very different, is irreparable. For, before either the Book of Kings, or the Pentateuch, or any of our existing scriptures were put together, many things were to happen that made such records look less important than men's ideas about Yahwe and his dealings with them. Indeed, such things had already happened in the north.

It is necessary to picture the situation.

A peaceful people of husbandmen is threatened by invaders; and it is a people with one idea common throughout its two kingdoms, though strongest in the south—namely, that Yahwe is the fighting god of the tribes. The legends tell how Yahwe's ark, in which he dwelt as in a portable shrine, led Joshua's hosts to victory; and how, though captured once and held by the Philistines, this sacred chest was again the mascot of David,

that mighty man of battle. In Judah, Yahwe is largely worshipped, in Israel other gods as well; and, when a menace comes to Israel, true patriots are uneasy.

It is their neighbours of Damascus who threaten first, in Ahab's time and Jehoram's; and then appears the first prophet, the first religious patriot of his kind—Elijah. Next it is the Assyrians, an enemy irresistible, conquerors of parts of Babylonia itself; and now two prophets of darker cast, Amos and Hosea, take up the agitation. Samaria falls. Jerusalem itself sends tribute to Nineveh. The doctrine preached begins to be accepted even in Judea. It is this—and it seems to have been in effect a new one—that Yahwe's favour depends upon the behaviour of his people.

We have to think of Scotland taken and the Germans before London. Something calls Sennacherib off, but there has been a great shock to comfortable minds; Judah is a subject nation, paying a war indemnity, and some of her people are slaves like the Samaritans. King Hezekiah breaks up the golden serpent, once the authentic image (?) of the god. With what motive he does it we have to imagine; but Hezekiah is a king who lays about him lustily; and on a tablet to be found in modern times at Nineveh Sennacherib pays him that compliment. The priests of his own time will pay him none; if one looks in the Bible for a contemporary account of the stormy and energetic monarch who defied Assyria and stamped out a Philistine revolt, it is not found there. The account in the Book of Kings, with its statement that he "did right in the sight of

Yahwe," is a far later compilation of traditions, equally coloured with other folklore.

But the consequence of these events, soon or late, is a reformed and stronger priesthood, with more influence as against kings and nobles (elders). For the behaviour understood to be acceptable to Yahwe consists in sacrifice, the abandonment of other gods, and observance of the priestly laws ascribed to Moses. Against these nobles, leading lives of luxury, Isaiah had fulminated like Carlyle in Chelsea; he himself being a friend of the chief priest Uriah. The priesthood comes to power. The national hope is that, with one worship alone permitted, the tribes will escape such high displeasure of the god; and in any case Hezekiah pays no more tribute.

Such was the situation in which the Bible as we have it was begun. We owe it to the new dignity acquired by what would now be called an Established Church—to the final recognition of national claims made by a priestly body. Some seventy years after the withdrawal of Sennacherib's army, they had produced the kernel of the Book of Deuteronomy, a book of laws.

When first publicly exhibited, this small book was said to have been "found in the temple"; for, as it augmented such laws as were represented in the older rolls to have been given by Moses, there was need of some popular statement about it. The older rolls were still extant. The proof is that, a little later, part of their contents was done into a kernel of the Book of Kings. But in the Book of Kings the effect of the doctrine preached by those early prophets—and sanctioned, as it seemed,

by events—is curiously apparent. Upon every king a summary judgment is passed from its point of view. Such a king “did evil in the sight of Yahwe,” and did not prosper ; such another did right, and all went well with him ; or, where the older record did not bear this theory out, a king was omitted. The aim of the Book of Kings was teaching, it is plain. The authors may be supposed to have thought, “Things must have been so, therefore they were so.” It is a common trick of unformed minds.

But the older record survived long enough to be drawn upon for still other books (Chronicles, etc.), which in places contradict them.

This treatment of existing documents, adapting them to notions current, went on for generations of bewildering fortune ; and scholars have coined a name for it. They call it “deuteronomistic revision.” It was not, indeed, new ; but in and after Deuteronomy it was often diligent. Every changing belief of those generations can be traced at work by it, in what re-editing was done.

For the time, however, this new hierarchy was well established. In the strength of the new law, it induced King Josiah to break up images of the other gods in Judæa, and to take stern measures against magicians and heretic soothsayers. And within the next thirty years (that is to say, before Judah, too, was conquered, and priests and nobles both were carried off to Babylon) the book of laws and the book of the united old collections of legends may have been combined—a kernel of the Pentateuch that was to be formed much later.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CREATION MYTH

IT is not more than an average lifetime since England was excited by a famous passage of arms between Professor Huxley and Mr. Gladstone over the most ancient myth in the Bible. It was excited greatly, and divided like two old-world armies watching a single combat of their chiefs.

Neither of those protagonists knew much of myths. As to the myths with which they were certainly acquainted, those of ancient Greece, they both supposed them to be a peculiar glory of that country, and a proof that even in prehistoric days Greece had had great minds. Dr. Frazer had not yet written his *Golden Bough*. Nor did they ask where this particular myth about creation came from, or how old it probably was, or how it might have taken shape. They could not have known then, if they had wished to know. The sole and simple quarrel between them was that the scientist said it gave an absurd account of things, while the amateur theologian said this account ought to be respected as an inspired one.

Mr. Gladstone was silenced without suspecting that Genesis contained a myth at all. Professor Huxley put him to confusion without suspecting that myths are not a form of symbolism devised by priests, but are a growth of popular fancy which



priests accept and build upon. Such a duel, of course, could not take place nowadays. But, even yet, the facts that have come to light about this venerable myth and that which follows it—the story of the first man and woman—are not well known.

These myths have profoundly influenced the life of Europe. Let us see how much has now been learned about their origins.

Between the years 668–625 B.C., when the Assyrian power was in its proudest glory, King Asur-bani-pal formed a great library in his palace at Nineveh. Less than twenty years after his death it was to be destroyed by Manda hordes—burned and broken down; yet to its contents, recovered from the ruins of the city, we owe most of our knowledge of Babylonian literature. The Assyrians, themselves engaged incessantly in war, took all their culture from the older civilization which they had first copied and last over-run. When, in our own time, the huge store of tablets in the library was deciphered, it was found to include a poem about creation; and this poem resembles in the most striking points the story told in Genesis. It appears, then, that just before the priests at Jerusalem had produced that modest kernel of *their* first book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, a myth which later came to be the first chapter of the Pentateuch had been embalmed in verse at Nineveh, 600 miles away.

The discovery should not have been surprising. Wherever there were Semites, there we might have expected to find the myth in some form. But at first it caused not only surprise, but the liveliest controversy. Did the Assyrian poet adapt his

story from the Bible, or did the author of the Pentateuch get his from Babylonia? And when, and how?

The age of the Pentateuch was not then known, and of these alternatives the first seemed possible. Yet so was the other, obviously; for Abram was said to have come from the land of the Chaldees, and so, it was thought even then, had the Canaanites; and through Palestine, from the east, there had always run a great trade route. Here was a problem for scholarship, if there had ever been one.

At the point we have reached in the story of the Bible, it is plain that the myth must have been older than either the Pentateuch or Asur-bani-pal's library. And that, again, is not wonderful. How long does a myth take to grow among any people, even in the early stage before men come to think it a piece of sacred and very ancient knowledge? We cannot say; but no one will suppose a thousand years too long for elementary minds to form a theory of nature. By what time had this myth taken shape in Babylonia? Except a mention of two of the gods on a tablet baked in 1500 B.C., there is nothing to show, it seems. But even if this was a popular myth before Phoenicians traded, or if it was known when Ur was a flourishing city, we have others quite as old. The myths of many peoples of antiquity, however varied, may be traced to common sources more remote.

There are such creation myths the world over. They can be grouped like the races to which they belong. And their character differs according as those races have lived near the sea or without knowledge of it—in plains or among mountains,

in hot or in cold climates. Though we had no other means of knowing whether this particular myth was conceived in Palestine, a mountain land, its character would tell us it was not.

But in the first chapter of Genesis it has an altogether different shape from that given to it by a late Assyrian poet. It is so different, so Jewish, so clearly told, and so imposing, that the date of this Palestinian version becomes a matter of special interest.

Let us compare the versions to see how they resemble each other in spite of all, and yet how great is their disparity of form and spirit. To begin with, the other is an epic, and certainly not primitive as such things go; and, of course, it gives its own names to the gods. The style of it may be roughly imagined from the translation of its opening lines which follows. These relate to a time before there were gods to make anything :—

Long since, when above  
The heaven had not been named,  
When the earth beneath  
Still bore no name,  
When Apsu the primeval, the generator, and the  
bearer Tiamat,  
Who brought them forth  
Their waters in one  
Together mingled,  
When fields were still unformed,  
Reeds still nowhere seen—  
Long since, when of the gods  
Not one had arisen,  
When no name had been named,  
No lot been determined,  
Then were made  
The gods.....

Coming down to the process of creation, the poem describes it more elaborately than Genesis does. First the gods make light. Then Tiamat, who is the dark ocean flood personified, rebels against them ; and the great Marduk, the boldest of their company, offers to subdue her if the rule of heaven and earth be guaranteed him. His offer being accepted, he cuts her in two, and so makes earth and heaven—or, rather, the upper and the lower waters, sky and sea. Next the heavenly bodies are formed, as “stations for the great gods,” the “watchmen.”

He smote her as a —  
 Into two parts :  
 One half he took,  
 He made it heaven's arch,  
 Pushed bars before it,  
 Stationed watchmen :  
 Not to let out its waters  
 He gave them as a charge.

Note the parallels up to this point. In Genesis, too, there are primeval waters, “darkness upon the face of the deep,” and the first step is the creation of light, the second that separation of upper and lower waters by a “firmament.” The further creations are stated in only a slightly different order in the two versions, as follows :—

<i>The Poem</i>	<i>Genesis I</i>
Heaven	Heaven
Heavenly bodies	Earth
Earth	Plants
Plants	Heavenly bodies
Animals	Animals
Man	Man

The sole difference is that in the Assyrian (in-

herited Babylonian) version, as might be expected of a people who made much of astrology, the heavenly bodies come second; in the Jewish fourth. There cannot be a doubt of the common origin.

But what of that? Everyone must feel that it leaves a good deal unexplained. We want to know what gave to the Jewish account its form and spirit. If this first chapter was in the original Pentateuch—this clear and orderly story, free of debris—how well developed the early Jewish mind must have been! If it was in the original Pentateuch, was it also in one of the lost books? What form had it there? Who gave it the form that was to be found acceptable to Western minds for many centuries—the sober and plain and solemn form that in our English Bible found such stately words?

Scholarship has answered these questions. It has thrown light upon the first two chapters of Genesis, with unforeseen results. From the first chapters of Genesis it has separated two accounts of the myth, and shown where they came from.

The results would not have been unforeseen if these accounts had been derived respectively from the literature of the north and the south, of Israel and Judah. But it appears that the northern story is overlaid by a priestly version made after the Exile. Not its orderly form alone suggests this, but a piece of teaching, which is nowhere found in pre-exilic writings.

Throughout a great part of the Pentateuch, and in other books of the Bible which have drawn upon the lost ones, these two can be distinguished by

one difference between them. Whatever differences else they show, this is generally present. The southern book speaks of Yahwe, the northern speaks of Elohim—gods. But the two accounts of creation both speak of Yahwe. How, then, are *they* distinguishable?

The words "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" reveal the priestly writer in the one put first—for an interesting reason. Here is the reason. Before the Exile the seventh day was a mere feast-day like others, as it seems to have been in many parts of Syria; only later did it come to be esteemed as holy by the Jews, and to be kept so as a proud difference between themselves and their oppressors. What feasts could a captive people make? Their weekly rest was never joyful. So, therefore, when the Exile ended, and Ezra, as the history runs, produced another Torah, this myth was doubtless written afresh for teaching purposes. It became a sort of parable. As Yahwe did his work in six days, and made the seventh holy, so should men do.

Turn to the fourth verse of Chapter II. In the middle of it, after the word "created," comes the clumsy join between this late account and the older one. The bit of that remaining is in the next three verses and the story of paradise.

But for this tell-tale fragment, it might have been supposed that the myth was picked up in Babylon during the Exile itself. And how unlikely! We should then have had to think that the author of the orderly, new, doctrinal version consciously took a large religious idea from oppressors whose rites were deemed abominable. The fact no doubt

was that he thought they had themselves taken it from the old books about Yahwe's people, some of which—he did not know how many—had perished with Solomon's temple. It was already Jewish ; but its origin, as he never guessed, was Babylonian. The good reasons why both accounts of it appear to have been derived from the older civilization are, first, that the epic is a finished literary form of something far more ancient, and, second, that this myth could not have been imagined by a hill people or a desert people.

This latter reason is well stated by Dr. Heinrich Zimmern, of Leipsic, Professor of Assyriology. He imagines the situation of those early men among whom the myth grew :—

During the long winter the Babylonian plain looks like the sea (which in Babylonian is Tiamtu, Tiamat), owing to the heavy rains. Then comes the spring, when the god of the vernal sun (Marduk) brings forth the land anew, and by his potent rays divides the waters of Tiamat, sending them partly upwards as clouds, partly downwards to the rivers and canals. So, thought the early Babylonians, must it have been in the first spring of all, when, after a fight between Marduk and Tiamat, the organized world came into being. Or (for Marduk is also the god of the early morning sun) just as the sun crosses and conquers the cosmic sea every morning, and out of the chaos of night causes first the heaven to appear and then the earth, so must heaven and earth have arisen for the first time on the morning of creation. To imagine a similar origin of the myth from the Hebrew point of view would be hopeless. The picture requires as its scene an alluvial land, which Babylonia is and Palestine or the Syro-Arabian desert is not ; and it requires, further, a special god of the spring sun, or of the early morning sun, such as Marduk is and Yahwe not.

These are considerations that would have prepared one for what the critics find. The myth was there in the books superseded, as it had come from Babylonia long, long before. The priestly superseding editor only improved the form of it.

Even the fragment of its old form which remains is like the epic, and like a Phœnician variant of it. The fragment is what contains the idea that man was made from the dust of the earth. So, too, in the Phœnician myth, Marduk forms dust first; and in the epic he makes man out of clay.

But when was this myth about Marduk first applied to the local hill-god Yahwe? When did it first come into the minds of a simple folk that their hill-god made the world?

No one knows; but it is a far cry from Musri to the fall of Jerusalem. A thousand years, perhaps. In this time, and especially in the last troubled century of this time, the idea the Jews had of their god had strangely developed. He was no longer a fighting god whose fortunes were linked with those of the tribes. He was greater than they were. The early prophets, seeing disaster strike this people, began to think of him as a moral governor, who could punish not only Israel, but other peoples too. They clung, as their successors did in and after the Exile, to the belief that it was a chosen people—one punished for its own good; while the heathen were punished in revenge pure and simple—but they could not hold the quaint and flattering notion of old days. It was as dead as the household gods. And the Exile made Yahwe seem greater still, as it gave



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the Jews experience of the world outside their little country.

What so natural as to begin the new scriptures with a clear and formal account of him as the maker of heaven and earth?

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FABLE OF ADAM AND EVE

THE origin of the story of Eden still perplexes many learned minds.

They have to account for its presence in a book which was made when the Jews were quite without a code of personal morals derived from religious feeling. That is to say, the Jewish religion was still a purely national concern, and not one of conscious individual righteousness or sin. They had not yet even the Ten Commandments. How did they come to have a fable about the sense of shame, which is certainly not national?

Of course they might have acquired this fable like the creation story, but it has been found nowhere else. True, the notion of a primeval state of happiness, such as Eden pre-supposes, has in its time been almost world-wide. That is found in Polynesian, Mayan, and even Aztec folklore, not to name many other stores. Incapable of seeing pain and death as the price we pay for human development—since development was not suspected by them—early men have everywhere sought to explain these things as consequences of some fault, of ignorance or disobedience. True also that this Jewish fable was partly founded, like the other one, upon a Babylonian myth. But it is remarkably different from that, so different as

to appear original. The Babylonian myth has nothing to do with shame; and, what is equally important, it does not blame woman, although it makes her creation secondary. The fault is with the man.

In the Babylonian version of this paradise myth that most resembles the one in Genesis, there is a tree of life (not of knowledge, mark) in a garden; and there is water of life. It is of these that Adapa, the first man, is forbidden to taste; and, curiously, his fault is that he does as he is told, thus failing to become immortal. This is not, in fact, a moral story. The god Ea, who tells him that if he tastes he will die, is as untruthful as the serpent said that Yahwe was. He is only given this *rôle* because the fable is a mere attempt to account for man's mortality. And there is no serpent. Indeed, the serpent in Eden is neither a Babylonian serpent nor Satan, who had not, when the Pentateuch was made, been yet imagined.

Now, the textual critics, with their keen eyes for re-editings, point out that in the Jewish fable there are two trees in the garden, a tree of life and a tree of sexual knowledge; but that the tree of life seems to be there for no purpose. As it stands, Adam and Eve might have eaten fruit by which they would be made immortal. The critics perceive that the tree of knowledge is imported; for, in the Babylonian version of this myth, knowledge is not only not forbidden to the first man, but possessed by him. He is primevally wise. Adapa is endowed, in fact, with "the secrets of heaven and earth," except, of course, that one great secret which Ea keeps from him.

There is no tree of knowledge in any Babylonian myth known to us. There is none known to us in the mythology of neighbouring peoples. It is an imported tree, and the critics can see that some editor was careless in not uprooting the other ; but they do not know where it came from.

And yet the sense of shame is individual, not national!

The serpent they can account for ; in Arabian folklore a serpent is the spirit of a tree, and knows, of course, the qualities of the fruit it bears. But the tree of sexual knowledge, the moral, and the notion that a woman's indocility or weakness, marred everything, seem here to be original.

Why not, however ? The early Jews had morals, if they had no code, and no "sense of sin," such as the later development of religion taught. We have seen that there was a healthy disposition among them to resist debasing practices and customs. There was also some asceticism, though not so much as there came to be. It appears probable that the key to the third chapter of Genesis is to be found in the belief that Samson's strength was in his hair.

This belief is very ancient ; and, in *The Golden Bough*, Dr. Frazer has given an explanation of those debasing customs which were connected with it in the rival worship of Ashtaroth :—

In the sanctuary of the great Phœnician goddess, Astarte, at Byblos, the practice was different (from an Egyptian one). Here, at the annual mourning for the dead Adonis, the women had to shave their heads, and such of them as refused to do so were bound to prostitute themselves to strangers and to sacrifice to the goddess with the wages of their shame.....It is clear that the

goddess accepted the sacrifice of chastity as a substitute for the sacrifice of hair. Why? By many peoples the hair is regarded as in a special sense the seat of strength; and so.....the women gave of their fecundity to the goddess, whether they offered their hair or their chastity. But why, it may be asked, should they make such an offering to Astarte, who was herself the great goddess of love and fertility? What need had she to receive fecundity from her worshippers? Was it not rather for her to bestow it on them? Thus put, the question overlooks an important side of polytheism, perhaps we may say of ancient religion in general. The gods stood as much in need of their worshippers as the worshippers in need of them. If the gods made the earth to bring forth abundantly, the flocks and herds to teem, and the human race to multiply, they expected that a portion of their bounty should be returned to them in the shape of tithe or tribute. On this tithe, indeed, they subsisted, and without it they would starve. Their divine bellies had to be filled, and their divine reproductive energies recruited.

In this worship of Astarte (Ishtar, Ashtaroth), and in that of Bel, which was like it, the priests of Yahwe saw their strongest adversaries flourish; and its ideas about sex were hateful to them. They wore their own hair long as Samson did, sharing the old idea that there was strength in it, or wishing to show that it was never sacrificed; but certainly the folk-tale of Samson as they took it into the temple records was a moral one, aimed against the rival worship. The Nazirite priests of later times, who also wore their hair untrimmed, were celibates. Need we look about, then, for any origin of the Jewish paradise story outside Judæa?

What wonder if these early Yahwists came to think of a fable taking quite another view of sex than the Phœnician view? Aiming to consecrate

it, the Astartists made sex odious : their rivals saw it rather as a shame and a burden than as a sanctifiable thing.

Modern minds may find it difficult, in any fertile country, to understand why the god should have been imagined as saying, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." What was the logic of this dark idea? Because our first parents had to perpetuate the species, and because the means was thought degrading, it did not obviously follow that the ground should bring forth thorns and thistles, still less that a curse was to rest upon the earth and all created beings. So we may think. But, to the minds of this people, it must have followed inevitably.

The case was not only that they were surrounded by deserts, or that the poor land of milk and honey was seamed by deep fissures of plutonic rock, strewn with debris, and only better than their former tropical wander-lands ; it was also that the worship of fertility had associated nature and man inseparably.

One idea runs throughout the most ancient folk-customs of the world—that it is possible, by what has been called sympathetic magic, to produce large effects by simple imitative means. Just as an ignorant servant girl may believe to-day that she can hurt her rival in love by sticking pins in a figure made to resemble her, so man was once persuaded that he could secure good harvests by ceremonies that prefigured their germination and growth. Some of these ceremonies were harmless, and even poetic. Others, like the Walpurgis nights of the Middle Ages and the sexual orgies of certain

savage tribes, may represent the grossest of them.

The idea of such an association of cause and effect took deep root. It has apparently been universal ; and it has so completely governed the thoughts and pious customs of mankind that they cannot be said to have had a true sense of separate life apart from the crops and herds on which they subsisted. The worship of Bel and Astarte was a late phase of its expression. Side by side with Yahwism, magic was largely practised still ; and there is a picturesque example of it in the device used by Jacob to gain possession of Laban's flocks. If, then, man was cursed, so was nature with him, as any one in such a land might see.

Thus, in all its aspects, the teaching in this story of "the Fall of Man" belonged most naturally to the time, place, and circumstances. Woman feels shame most, men said, and bears the race's burden in her travail : her fault, not man's, must therefore have been the cause that lost us Paradise.

That motherhood should be glorious, that love may inspire us greatly, that woman's heavy and delicate task refines her, not degrades, men did not dream of saying. That would have been to accept the worship of fecundity, and try to reform it. These, indeed, are modern notions. For their parts, the Jews saw a half-truth taught abominably, and seized upon the other half as theirs. What was the knowledge imparted in these shocking "mysteries" ? Surely that which had doomed both woman and man to sorrow—her to the pains of childbirth, him to ungrateful toil. Their tree of knowledge symbolized this knowledge. Shameful

Astarte made it : shameful it was, and cursed with penalties.

The Jewish mind was to show great gifts of divination and symbolism.



## CHAPTER VII

### EXILE AND GENESIS

THE priests had not only moral and religious motives, but patriotic ones. In Genesis there is more patriotism than religion or morality ; and it has been found that they were responsible for it.

To understand this extraordinary book we must begin by imagining the life that had been led by those Jews who were prisoners of war during 150 years.

The exiles were not mere husbandmen. They were for the most part a nobility, such as it was ; the humbler people had been left behind. Pride of race no less than religious arrogance was crushed by this defeat and expatriation. What was to keep it alive ?

They saw the might and the rich civilization of Babylonia, much as the transported Boers saw those of England on undreamed-of seas, but at their very centre. They could not wonder that the most heroic defence had failed—a defence prolonged for years in successive efforts of their countrymen, until every man of spirit had been brought in to join the captives. They saw about them great buildings, learning, an ordered and very wonderful life, strength of arms, a busy commerce bringing unbounded riches. Nor were they very hardly used. Their young king, Jehoiachin,

was released among them after a brief imprisonment; they were evidently not feared, or deemed to be of much account. They could understand quite well why their fellow Israelites of the north, worse treated, had not come back from Nineveh; but neither was any hope of their own return held out. They were expected to become part and parcel of a new country.

As hope in their own breasts died, some of them lost all sense of their nationality, and the next generations largely settled down. They had been given lands; and the busy life of Babylon and lesser towns must have absorbed many. They forgot the old country and married, becoming Babylonians. That this is what happened appears clear; for at the end of a century and a half, in which time a people may increase very largely, those who returned with Ezra were only a third as many as those who had been escorted out of Judah. The wonder is that even a few were kept together.

It is a wonder not only for the reasons glanced at, but because there was no such fixed race feeling as afterwards made the dispersed Jews of all the world exclusive, and holds them still unmingled with us Gentiles like oil in water. Because, too, their conquerors were not another race. They must have disappeared wholly but for the embers of their religious faith, which refused to go spark out.

At once, among the captives, a new prophet had begun to sound the notes of a doctrine that met the new disaster with an explanation. Ezekiel, a member of the priestly order and a man of very striking imaginative gifts, preached courage in

submission. Yahwe's hand, he said, was heavy upon them for their good : let them be only faithful. Those baser countrymen at home were doomed, for now they lacked all piety ; but here, on the river Chebar, their God had saved a "remnant" for his glory. Had not the prophet Jeremiah, through years of peril, declared that some such end of it must come? By him they had known of Yahwe's purpose.

Ezekiel's view of what this was, expanding as he lived and gathering splendid imagery from his surroundings, took hold like a golden dream upon the minds of all whom ideals could influence. It was the appeal of genius to an aristocracy, a forlorn hope to which stout hearts and feeble ones alike could rally. It was that of a supple statesman, too ; for, in times anxious for Babylonia, Ezekiel went so far as to back King Nebuchadrezzar in wars against Egypt, Tyre, and Israel. And, finally, when hope burned bright, he gave it a concrete object. The architecture of the "land of bondage" had fascinated him ; he designed a new and finer temple, some day to be built for Zion.

This captivity was the nursing mother of the Jewish race. The remnant lived to found a famous people, fit for all vicissitudes.

There is abundant proof of how the doctrine of Ezekiel cheered them, to take exhilaration readily from changing fortune. After him came a poet, "the second Isaiah," whose beautiful and pathetic verse—corrupted and grouped with imitations of it—we find assembled by far later hands as that of the Isaiah of a hundred years before him. It was he who wrote "Comfort ye my people." And we

shall see that, in the long Exile, those who held to the national ideal learned to set a new value on old records.

It was inevitable. They were far from the holy place that Yahwe was believed to dwell in; their rites of sacrifice could not be offered. They could only cling to the hope of being allowed some day to renew them, and greatly to atone for past irreverence. What might piety find to do in the meantime? It did find things to do, or, in spite of prophets and poets, it must have died. For one thing, it certainly recalled the old records left behind in Jerusalem. How old they were, how recent in fact, the banished priesthood could not know, since there had been neither date nor author's name on them. But the ancient lore of Babylonia seemed to be derived from them.

It has not been pointed out, I think, that this impression must have immensely exalted Jewish pride. If it had not done so, Babylonian records would have destroyed the religion of Yahwe. If, for one moment, the Jews could have admitted that Bel and Marduk were the older gods, or that certain great figures of transplanted folklore were not their own, they must have lost faith in their destiny. What they understood, no doubt, was that they were the older people, kinsfolk of the ancient Chaldeans, and that Babylon had borrowed and deformed their history and creed. For them, the proof was what they had in writing—or had once possessed—legends not only of the world's beginning, but of Enoch and Noah and Abram, and what happened in the Plain of Shinar when all men yet spoke Hebrew. The figure of Abram

took a new importance. Some of them must have seen the ruins of Ur, his city. Was it *not* his city? Even if the legends had referred once to another Ur, in Musri, as certain scholars think, that place was now forgotten.

Whatever piety found to do besides—to observe a saddened Sabbath, to fast, to practise circumcision—we may be sure that, as cultured exiles like Ezekiel became acquainted with the libraries, they pored over the earliest mythology with a strange interest. They could accept no ideas from it, save as they found fuller traces of their own. But these traces were priceless. About the days before the Flood it gave some wonderful details which had been lacking in their scanty rolls.

Ezekiel's golden dream fulfilled itself—with Persian aid.

After the first fifty years it was cherished under a power which, in ruling Babylonia, allowed complete liberty of worship; and a new temple at Jerusalem was erected with money furnished by the exiles. The dream became reasonable. First Nineveh had subdued the northern kingdom, and Nineveh was no more. Then Babylon, their own oppressor, had been humbled by Cyrus. Hope deferred made their hearts sick for a good deal longer; but, after two reigns, they had a statesman in the counsels of Artaxerxes. Nehemiah obtained the royal leave to visit Jerusalem and report, and then to return with an administrative mission. He did so, not with any avowed aim at political independence, but to rebuild the city wall against a local rebel who was active in the north, harrying the subject lands from Samaria. Political

independence, indeed, was never again to be completely enjoyed by the Jewish people. But, when he had performed this loyal service, there was no longer any question of exile.

Ezra was allowed to lead back the remnant to worship in their own sanctuary.

It might surely make the subject of a great painting, this journey of six thousand pious Asiatics, descendants of some of those unhappy captives who had been driven across the hot plains of Syria five generations before. Their arrival in Jerusalem must have been a moving spectacle—a host of subject people, humbled extremely, glad to come with tears to the holy hill they had dreamed of, and welcomed no less pathetically. The history of religions can furnish no parallel to it. Nor is there any parallel in the history of literature to the creative impulse which this long Exile and its happier issue gave.

Pathetically the leaders of the romantic remnant set themselves to frame a new law, and then to found national archives that should embody their new conception of the past. When these latter are examined, it indeed appears that they have small value for the historian, who can only reconstruct a true past from them with immense difficulty and much uncertainty. It appears even that they were in part ingenuously invented, as well as credulously assembled. But, when understood, they present a deeply interesting picture of the time and of these devotees—a picture still discernible though blurred with yellow age and marred by many unskilful restorers.

The work was done with a heightened national

complacency, if without the old belief in a fighting god and in the rule of kings. The new and confident idea had taken root among the Jews that Yahwe, greater than their fathers knew, had designed from the beginning his chosen people's fortunes ; and that idea made it desirable to arrange the legends in due order, within a framework of history if this could be supplied.

It is their setting in the framework of a pseudo-history, the deliberate form used, the sophistication of folklore with dry detail—genealogies and the like—which, in Genesis and some following books, has most imposed upon the dark ages in Europe, baffling even the minds of sceptics. It was impossible to doubt utterly their good faith ; it was equally hard to imagine their origin ; and, so long as men supposed that these books were of one piece, or thought of them as in any sense historical, they were bound to remain the greatest of enigmas. They could only be rejected as preposterous, or read with a credulity like that of the legend-makers. Their real interest for men was clouded inaccessibly. On the one hand they fostered superstition, on the other useless ridicule. They were a farrago of priestly humbug, and they were God's Word. It is beyond the scholarship or the capacity of any man to say what the tragic consequences of this ignorance have been on both sides. Confusion still results from it.

No slight importance, then, is to be attached to the labour of criticism which has enabled us to distinguish the priestly structure of the books from their other contents, and to realize with a free intelligence the circumstances of their make-up.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PRIEST LORE AND FOLKLORE

IF we wish to know what was in the superseded books of relatively pure folklore—apart from some account of creation—it is necessary to strike out from Genesis the genealogies and five special stories of later growth, which must be specified. These were the priests' insertions.

The genealogies represent their attempt to construct a history for the tribes of a thousand years back, whose names were still preserved by the aristocratic system which had made the elders of tribes judges, and some of them kings. It will be seen that lists of names are made up on a uniform plan. Each bears the title, "This is the genealogy of So-and-so." And, as the scraps of old narrative come between them, each, after the first, begins with a brief recapitulation.

The first is that portentous list of long-lived men who flourished before the Flood, patriarchs *par excellence*; and these have been found in Asur-bani-pal's library with Babylonish names. There are ten of them, and there were ten pre-diluvian kings in Babylonia with mighty ages. The adoption of such fabulous material may suggest that these "historians" were not less simple than the common people, who had furnished tales for the superseded rolls; and the fact, if fact it be, is not surprising.



Within the memory of men still living, it was believed that a man named Methuselah lived 969 years. But among Semitic peoples a dynasty or a clan went anciently by the name of the founder, and it is possible that these ten names were at first understood to represent ten clans.

However, the genealogies that speak of normal lives are equally untrustworthy. They pretend to measure time—to make up a chronology which had been lacking. How they were arrived at after a thousand years we have to wonder; certainly the process cost prodigious effort and conjecture. To some extent the pious compiler may have been helped by data in the legends, but these gave men's ages casually or not at all. Or he may have had some proud family trees before him. Even so, he was no better off; for it is with families as with clans—terms are vague. The words "father" and "son" frequently mean ancestor and descendant; a country or place is said to "beget" a man, its dependencies are called its daughters, and the members of two friendly clans are brothers. So it turns out that some patriarch in a list, of whom the legends tell also, never had an existence; that another, if he indeed lived, was quite a different person; that men and places have been much confused, and that we are probably dealing with fiction from first to last.

How could it be otherwise? The compiler of these genealogies displays an ingenuity equal to that of Baconian cipher-makers, and freer. Conceive the unconscious boldness and rare diligence of it, exercised upon such material as he could only have, fragmentary, undated, and bald.

The five supplementary stories are either tales of Abram, henceforth to be revered by the Jews as their greatest ancestor, or tales directed against that intermarriage with other peoples which had so reduced the numbers of the faithful. They include that of Yahwe's "covenant" with this patriarch, now said definitely to have come from Ur of the Chaldees; that of his buying a burial-place near Hebron (Sinai); and the brief account of his death. They include also the story of how the outcast Esau (Edom personified) married a Canaanite, but Jacob one of his own kinswomen, and the repellent story of a treacherous slaughter provoked by Dinah's marriage with a Hivite prince, and carried out in spite of his people's circumcision. The chapter about the "dukes" appears to be foreign matter.

What was the source of the new legends? How could they be thought authentic, and fit to be added so late to written lore? There is no answer but that in one generation legends grow unchartered, and in the next are taken to be true. There had been time for this in Babylon, and there was time afterwards. The Book of Genesis was garished more than once before a sanhedrin considered it inspired, and a temple legend grew that Ezra had dictated the whole Old Testament.

When the priestly framework and augmentations are looked at by themselves a curious fact appears.

Not only do they contain no new stories of the god appearing in person, but three names are given to him in successive periods, as if some theory of the old diversities had been formed. They are given on the three occasions of a

"covenant" with patriarchs. He is Elohim for Noah, El Shaddai (believed to mean either "the destroyer" or "the all-sufficient") for Abram, and Yahwe for Jacob. In our English Bible these names, so different in significance, are unfortunately translated "God" or "the Lord" alike. It has been said already that the Jewish idea of God developed gradually, and this is one slight sign of the development. It serves to mark the period of re-editorship, as do the genealogies, the Abram stories, the prominence given to the idea that there had been a covenant, the mention of kosher meat in connection with Noah, and the "sanctifying" of every seventh day. There were also some additions to the Flood myth and the fine folk-tale of Joseph; but these two stories must be treated in special chapters.

By way of contrast, let us see what has been noted by scholars with regard to the separated fragments of the lost books. It is what proves to them that there were such books.

Even in an English translation, their character is quite different from that of the framework. They are more like unadulterated folklore. With a child-like imagination, they tell of the god coming like a man to hold friendly talks with patriarchs, who answer him with a kind of intimacy, unsurprised; and they have wonderful stories of dreams and angels. Yet there are marked differences between them, extremely interesting.

The fact has been stated that they can generally be distinguished one from another by Yahwe being the name of the god in the southern or Judæan book, and Elohim that of the god or gods (the

plural meaning is doubtless the older) in the northern or Israelitish book. It has also been stated that they seem to have been combined before the Exile ; but this combining was not so done as to blot out every other sign of their separate origin. The Yahwe passages, which are taken to be southern because in one or two cases they stress Judæan interests, are especially easy, free, and in a rude way poetic—that is to say, they have the true charm of folklore, whereas the style of their later editors is very careful. The editors laboured not to be misunderstood. Then these passages are stories without a moral ; and that, of course, is characteristic of folklore, which is not consciously invented. They impute to the patriarchs various acts not now considered moral at all by civilized societies—acts that represent the standard of the age in which such tales were told.

The Elohim passages are taken to be northern because in one of them—the story of Jacob, who was the “father” of Israel—he is made to love Rachel and not Leah, who was the mother of Judah, Reuben, and Levi, southern tribes. It is unlikely that such a legend would have grown in the land of Judah. These northern legends are less poetic and less naïve. In them the god never appears in person, but only comes in dreams ; or, if he speaks, it is by a voice from heaven. Another of them—the story of Joseph—shows knowledge of Egypt, to which men’s thoughts were turned (as to a possible ally) when foreign armies from the East first threatened. In two more there is a touch of learning. These note that Laban spoke Aramaic, the language of Damascus, and that before the

ancestors] of Israel left Chaldea they had a strange religion.

If the southern book seems older than the northern (but it may only be less civilized), it is plain beyond doubt that both were older than the priestly framework. Their actual age is estimated better by other fragments of them which appear in Judges and Samuel ; and these, while showing them to be later than Solomon's day, help to make it certain that they were older than the days when Hosea persuaded people of Yahwe's coming vengeance—namely, about the middle of the eighth century B.C. There is nothing of this in them. The people who told each other such legends, and the earlier priests who collected them, were quite at ease, and had not imagined that Yahwe could ever stand off from the tribes or feel displeasure. It is thus perceived that the framework must have been furnished three hundred years later than either book of folklore.

These are very remarkable triumphs of analysis ; yet, when all is done, they bring us face to face with a huge puzzle. This must now be stated.

Although the earlier temple rolls were boldly supplemented, parts of them superseded, and they themselves allowed at last to perish, much was retained that contradicts the new religious teaching. How did this happen ? It is amazing. Look at the contradictions. According to that teaching, religion began at Sinai with Moses, and what has been conveniently called the framework says nothing of a rite of sacrifice in patriarchal times. But, according to the lost rolls, Abel and Abram offered sacrifices. If an editor was so ingenious as to think that "Elohim" and "El Shaddai" had

been dark names of a god now better known, why did he not re-name the god throughout? Why was the theory only good enough to hint at in a "framework," where it could never have come to light without such analysis? Why, again, did he pass the story of Abram's marriage with his sister, and that of Lot's intimacy with his daughters, when the priestly code of laws compiled about this time forbade incest? Finally, there are glaring contradictions in the edited story of the Flood; for, while the lost rolls say that rain lasted forty days and that it took twenty-one days for the waters to disappear, the priestly account is that the duration of the whole deluge was 365 days, and the time of subsidence 150. What a jumble Genesis is! How could any painstaking compiler of genealogies, or any careful editor at all, have left it so?

The solution of this literary puzzle is the greatest triumph. It is, quite simply, that the framework must have been constructed to serve as the whole book, and not to be a framework at all; that, however orthodox and careful, it failed to satisfy; and that the next generation required an editor respectfully to combine the ancient rolls with it—a task too difficult for any man.

That would account for everything, and no solution else can do so. It fits the circumstances of that time. Ezra and Nehemiah both say that the former brought from Babylon a "book of the law of Yahwe.....which had been given by the hand of Moses," and which claimed, therefore, to be as old as anything known to the priests already at Jerusalem. May not this have included the so-called framework of Genesis? Must it not? Can

we imagine a law without an account of the chosen people to whom it had been given—without the “covenant” and the teaching? It had been compiled by the exiles for their need. It had been compiled all the more freely if, as tradition seems to say, they believed that the old scriptures, or some of them, had perished when Nebuchadrezzar’s army set fire to the temple of Solomon. On a great day in Jerusalem, in 444 B.C., the congregation of the synagogue pledged itself to the acceptance of the book thus introduced; and, so far, it was plain sailing. But there was extant in Judea that older kernel of Deuteronomy, with the united books of legends. Were these to be forgotten as well as superseded? They had had an equal authority: they had served the temple ever since it was rebuilt, as Malachi makes plain; and the exiles, although they might have ruled its restoration, and did now rule its ritual, came late with their new law of Moses.

The Judean scriptures could be neither forgotten nor superseded. Some forty years appear to have passed, and then the zeal for an adequate past and future produced the patchwork Pentateuch.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DELUGE

A FASCINATING book might be written about "The Romance of Ignorance." The material for it is abundant. It might include far more than all we know of folklore, and must, indeed, if adequately planned, be the whole story of man's life upon the planet. It should point forward hopefully ; for, if we are wiser in anything than those who lived before us, the pains of ignorance are still man's spur.

In such a book, however large, there could be no chapter more romantic than one displaying the history of the flood myth. We should see it originate among a people to whom the winter brought floods habitually, and who knew so little of geography as to think that Syria was a circular piece of land surrounded by the ocean, and that there was no other land in the flat world but seven small islands disposed about it symmetrically. We should see the myth amplified with detail, like a true story, so that what was at first told about a sun-god became the adventure of a man. We should see it treasured until it was taken into that strange literature the growth of which is now in question, and which, as time went by, the Jews believed to have been inspired by the flat world's Maker. As one issue of the strangest circumstances, we should watch the literature and this belief adopted by the Christian peoples of a world rather



larger, but still flat, and valued as their most precious possession. Exact knowledge of the earth's shape, physical history, and cosmic origin would be shown in course of time to accumulate ; and for all that, after five or six thousand years—possibly much longer—we should find the simple myth enduring side by side with it, preferred to it, defended against it with alarm, and able still to awe the imaginations of those peoples with a sense of insecurity.

Yet ignorance, no less than dry, cold knowledge, is seasoned for our plight by humour. Even those persons who revered the myth longest would be seen to amuse their children with it ; so that quaint toys made in the Black Forest represented a singular ship, a few human beings in coloured gowns, and pairs of all the commoner animals, preserved alive when the deity drowned his creatures in disgust. And this would be the formidable myth's last aspect. In turn a conceit of early men about the elements, an epic of some national hero, a Jewish legend of divine goodwill and a Christian nightmare, it might be seen to end delightfully.

The way in which it grew is very curious.

So long as it was only a conceit about the elements, men did not think of any actual flood at all, or, indeed, of anything that had taken place on the earth. They figured the sun, the moon, the stars, and the clouds as gods ; and their stories about such gods told of them, of course, as living in the heavens, where these things are. Thus the hero who came afterwards to be imagined as a man in a ship was first a god in the sun. He is still no more than that among the people of the

Pacific islands, who have many such notions. The sun and the moon are figured in some of these islands as canoes, in others as a god and his wife; the stars as ships, or as the sun and moon's children; the clouds as ships of the air-god. These Polynesians have still the deluge story in its most rudimentary form—the form of savage and unconscious poetry. At Tahiti the flood is “the flood of the day's eye (the sun),” and there is also a “flood of the moon.” The sun and moon gods sail through day and night in their respective ships.

In early times in Babylonia, where the sun-god Bel was chiefly worshipped, the flood over which he triumphed easily came to be thought of as actual water, man's greatest enemy. One story explained creation by this triumph, as we have seen. Another, bringing the god down to earth, imagined him as riding in a ship made by his god-like skill, through a real deluge. It was then a myth about winter, which, being a rainy season, covers low-lying plains, as the sea covered those of Holland when the dykes were cut.

He was now a god-man, like many others; and as such he was given a special title, such as “flood-rider” or “ship-builder” might be. But as the language of the people changed—for a language is changing always—and the meaning of this descriptive title was forgotten, it became his only name. He was no longer a sun-god at all, but Par-napisti, a man. And, the flood being accounted for by the anger of other gods, the myth began to grow.

We know from a tablet preserved in the Constantinople Museum that it had taken shape before

2140 B.C., for on this much-defaced but dated piece of pottery there are fragments of it. And it was found complete in Asur-bani-pal's library.

There it formed one of a whole cycle of twelve such myths and legends, one for every month, every sign of the zodiac; and its sign was the constellation now called Aquarius. Why was it placed under this particular constellation by pious astrologers? Because Aquarius governed a month lasting from the middle of January to the middle of February, which is, in Babylonia, the month of rains. The hero, Par-napisti, was the last of those long-lived wonderful men who lived before "The Flood."

It is a singular fact that early peoples, who on the one hand supposed that there must have been a paradise and perfect happiness, on the other imagined many such world-catastrophes as this. Failing to conceive the first phenomena of the world's creation in any form, as some of them did, these appear to have dodged all speculation about it. They certainly escaped the mighty problem when they began from a destruction of some race that had gone before. The Aztecs believed in four past ages, cut off from each other by universal cataclysms; the Zoroastrians in six, to be followed by still another, and then by new heavens and a new earth; the Stoics, too, had a system of separated periods in remote succession. It seems to have been thought that the gods were desperately engaged in re-modelling their faulty creatures. Flood, fire, and frost were indifferently supposed to have been the agents of destruction.

But the myth of Par-napisti was so like that of

Noah that this is seen quite obviously to have been derived from it. Here is that more ancient myth.

The gods, especially Bel, were angry with mankind because the accustomed sacrifices were not made, and so resolved to drown all living things. But one of them, Ea, chose out the hero for deliverance. Appearing to him in a dream, Ea commanded Par-napisti to build a ship, the form of which he prescribed, and to take into it with him "the seeds of life of every kind." The ship was built; its dimensions are given very precisely on the tablet. It was coated within and without with pitch; and into it Par-napisti brought his family and servants, with beasts of the field and wild beasts and seeds of all kinds of life. Upon his going into this ark, the deluge began—torrents of rain, with a great storm and thick darkness; the whole earth became a sea; and men and animals, those in the ship excepted, perished miserably. Six days and nights the tempest raged, but on the seventh there was a calm. So Par-napisti opened the air-hole, and saw that his ship had grounded on the mountain of Nisir; and after seven days more he sent out a dove, then a swallow, and finally a raven, of which the last returned no more. By this he knew the flood was ended, and, coming out of his ship, he offered a sacrifice. "The gods," says the tablet poem, "smelt the savour, the gods smelt the sweet savour. The gods gathered like flies about the sacrificer."

This is the best known Babylonian version of the myth, and, when it is compared with the Jewish

version, one sees that other folklore has gathered about the latter. It begins, indeed, with a bit of old-world popular belief not contained in the poem, though known to all who read or heard it—an account of the way in which those mighty long-lived men came to be born. Gods married women, and "there were giants in the earth in those days." This is interesting because the idea that kings were gods was common everywhere, and survives in those religions which have stories of incarnations.

Dr. Frazer has shown that, as folklore is full of magicians who were kings, it is probable that the earliest kings were all magicians; for magic came before religion, and led to it. The idea of their godhead was part of the popular belief in their supernatural powers, and would not seem impossible or at all strange to men who thought that gods were beings with the same passions and the same bodily appearance as their own. The man-god was no great wonder. Certainly he was no greater wonder than the miracles he seemed to do. There are many such wonders still to be found among the Malays and the African negroes, and Brahman priests are "re-born" as Vishnu for certain occasions by a ceremony. Divinity hedges a king very literally in Burma and Siam, though he is nowadays no magician; and in quite recent times it still gave a "divine right" to kings in England, as it does in an altered sense to the Kaiser and the Mikado.

This old belief in incarnation was vigorous in ancient Babylonia, and legends had grown up according to which the kings of a forgotten past were specially great. It is to these that the flood

story in Genesis alludes. Only the writer did not know that his "giants" had been kings of Babylonia at all, and priestly editors may have taken the story of the marriage of gods and women, with its evil consequences, to be a warning against the marriage of their own people with foreigners.

But what had become of the name and fame of Par-napisti? And who was Noah, that such a myth should be transferred to him? No sure answer can be given; but what is known of this patriarch proves that he had a name and fame of his own before the transference was made.

In the lost southern book of Judea, Noah was the first agriculturist, the mythical man who found out how to make wine; and this book contained no flood story. It contained the story of Noah's drunkenness told so as to explain the subjection of Canaan.

Scholars have some reason to think, however, that the Flood story must have been current, though it had not taken much hold on the popular mind. They suspect that it was told, not of Noah, but of Enoch, about whom a whole body of legendary lore, not included in the Bible, continued to gather for hundreds of years. Like such heroes as Par-napisti, Enoch had joined the company of the gods without dying. As to the confusion between two heroes, they point out that in Hebrew script, which at this time had no vowels, one name might easily be mistaken for the other. In any case, it is found that the Flood story was apparently first attached to Noah when the two lost books were combined, and was amplified when this joint work was badly blended with the priestly "history"

produced during the Exile. This is how it happens that in one chapter Noah, who lives for 950 years, is "a just man and perfect," and in another is shamefully intoxicated. This, too, accounts for the varying statements about the Flood's duration.

There are other points of difference between the Jewish and the Babylonian versions of the myth. Like Bel, Yahwe was appeased with sacrifice, and "smelled a sweet savour"; but his reason for destroying men was not that they had omitted the rite; it was that "the earth was filled with violence." The ship rests on another mountain, but that is natural; Ararat was no doubt the highest mountain known to the chronicler. Then the Jewish version has the beautiful symbol of the rainbow, which could only have been thought of by an imaginative and hopeful people. This was in the joint book of tribal legends; but the covenant of which it is said to be a token, and the injunctions against eating blood and committing murder, are priestly glosses.

As for Enoch, he was an ancestor of the Canaanites, a son of Cain, the first city-builder. Perhaps that is why, if he was indeed the hero of one Flood story, the Jews were not at first respectful of it, and why they later on preferred to him a hero of their own. It is to be noted that in this case they must have found the myth in Canaan when they arrived there. They did find many myths of Babylonian origin; and whether an Abram came in fact from Ur of the Chaldees or only from Ur-kasdim in Musri, certain it is that all their lore was enriched in the land they had conquered. Here they found an early Babylonish culture well established.

But we cannot know the extent of their indebtedness, for, great as Phœnicia was in commerce and the crafts, little of her old store of myths has been preserved.



## CHAPTER X

### MOLECH, SODOM, BABEL

WE should be wholly at fault in trying to form an idea of the barbarism of these times from the simplicity and superstitious trend of Hebrew literature alone. Convincing as it is, the literature is that of their best minds. The average mind of the Jewish people in the fourth century before Christ was far less humane and intelligent than it appears even from contents of the Pentateuch.

The story of Abram killing and burning a ram instead of his firstborn son is not to be taken, for example, as meaning only that the religion of Yahwe was by this time less cruel than other cults. It means that the sacrifice of firstborn sons had been a horrible custom of the Semites whatever god they worshipped, and was only now dying out. There is proof of this even in the priestly law as it stands in *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, and *Numbers*. "And the Lord [Yahwe] spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn; whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast, it is mine." The command was made clear again and again. It is true that provision was also made for a payment to the priests in lieu of human sacrifice, as for the substitution of an edible beast for one that was not eaten. But this provision was historically recent;

the right of the gods to every firstborn male had been formerly recognized from immemorial antiquity.

Dr. Frazer has shown how human sacrifices came about. Primitive peoples, believing that their safety and welfare were bound up with the lives of divine kings, and seeing that these men-gods grew old like other men, killed them in order to catch and transfer their souls to suitable successors. A custom then grew up by which, the purpose being forgotten, a king's son or a subject might die in his stead; and, when men came at length to worship imaginary gods instead of human ones, the rite of sacrifice endured, and was even augmented. Among some peoples it was a general ordinance. As men revolted, this dreadful rite was either commuted by the priests or practised only if some calamity threatened, such as war or scarcity.

The western Semitic race, if not the Babylonian also, was one in which the sacrifice of children had been usual, and still was rife.

Phœnician history is full of it; and we should be wrong to think of the early Jews as a people distinct in blood from the Phœnicians, who spoke the same tongue, shared the same elementary ideas, and had a marked commercial genius. Events, and a consequent development of ideas, produced a new nation in the hinterland of Phœnicia, called now the Israelites; but the old ideas were not easily to be discouraged. There was for some generations, at Jerusalem, a regularly appointed place where, until the Exile, Judean parents burned their children to appease "Molech"; and, in poems

attributed to the second Isaiah, there is a passage indicating that the practice may have been renewed far later.

Who was Molech? No alien god, as at one time conjectured in Europe. Molech, in the opinion of scholars, was Yahwe.

The name means "the king"—that is to say, the tutelary god of this people. "King" was one of Yahwe's common titles—"the king, Yahwe of hosts." And those who made these child sacrifices, which seem to have been incessant in the seventh and eighth centuries, did but revive an ancient usage. They were stricter pietists, looking upon optional substitutions as a lapse from true religion. The cause of such a revival in Judea (for it seems to have been confined to Judea) is not hard to find: it was doubtless the peril in which the country stood from foreign armies.

The scene of those holocausts was a fair garden in the Valley of Hinnom, just outside the walls of the city, and it bore the name, infamous ever after, of Tophet, the fireplace. There, in a deep and wide pit made for such cremations, children without number "passed through the fire to Molech."

In *The Golden Bough* the origin of the Passover is explained in the light of what we know about this terrible usage. The explanation occurs as a comment on the tradition or legend of a previous captivity in Egypt:—

Why should the Israelites kill the firstlings of their cattle for ever because God once killed those of the Egyptians? And why should every Hebrew father have to pay God a ransom for his firstborn child because God once slew all the firstborn children of the Egyptians? In this form the tradition offers no intelligible explanation

of the custom. But it at once becomes clear and intelligible if we assume that in the original version of the story it was the Hebrew firstborn that were slain ; that, in fact, the slaughter of the firstborn children was formerly what the slaughter of the first-born cattle always continued to be—not an isolated butchery, but a regular custom, which, with the growth of more humane sentiments, was afterwards softened into the vicarious sacrifice of a lamb and the payment of a ransom for each child.....The Passover, if this view be right, was the occasion when the awful sacrifice was offered ; and the tradition of its origin has preserved in its main outlines a vivid memory of the horrors of these fearful nights. They must have been like the nights called Evil on the west coast of Africa, in Dahomey and Ashantee, when the people keep indoors because the executioners are going about the streets and the heads of the human victims are falling in the king's palace. But, seen in the lurid light of superstition or of legend, they were no common mortals, no vulgar executioners, who did the dreadful work at the first Passover. The Angel of Death was abroad that night ; into every house he entered, and a sound of lamentation followed him as he came forth with his dripping sword. The blood that bespattered the lintel and doorposts would at first be the blood of the firstborn child of the house ; and, when the blood of a lamb was afterwards substituted, we may suppose that it was intended not so much to appease as to cheat the ghastly visitant.....(Probably) the slaughter was done by masked men, like the Mumbo Jumbos and similar figures of West Africa, who were believed by the uninitiated to be the deity or his divine messengers come in person to carry off the victims. .. When the leaders had decided to allow the sacrifice of animals instead of children, they would give the people a hint that, if they only killed a lamb and smeared his blood on the doorposts, the bloodthirsty but near-sighted deity would never know the difference.

The venial northern story of Abram and Isaac was told of patriarchs who were fabled to have

lived 1,200 years earlier than the return from Exile. The Passover had not then, perhaps, been thought of; and it seems reasonable to assume that, instead of Yahwe "tempting" Abram, in order to stay infanticide, his was a name of dread for every mother.

Far, therefore, from thinking of the earliest state of man as excellent, we have to regard the literature of the Pentateuch, with all its peccancies, as marking with a unique fullness one of the stages of man's emergence from darker times. The fabled innocence was there, but it was that of a savage ignorance, from which men freed themselves imperfectly but surely. The revolt against human sacrifices was one effort, the revolt against sexual baseness another. At the stage now reached in Jewish history both were denounced as shameful; and the latter supplied to leaders the teaching motive that made them welcome the legend of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There is ample evidence that even the most disgusting aberrations from the natural order of life had their origin in magic, for which religion is a progressive and purer substitute. Many of them were suggested by the superstition that strength or life could be conveyed by men to trees and crops, or to puissant god-men.

It has been quite beside the mark to conjecture that some volcanic disturbance may have been the origin of the legend of Sodom, and thus to conserve some possible historical value for it. It is a variant of the Flood story—another fable of the wrath of the gods with men. The region of the Dead Sea, desolate and barren, has been often scanned with

a view to some natural explanation of it, and supposed to mark the site of buried cities. But the legend falls to pieces under critical examination, and there is no reason to take it literally more than to believe that Zeus destroyed the Phrygian city of Gortyna by continual thunderbolts, to think of Lot and Abram as more real than Philemon and Baucis, or to respect the tradition that each of the small lakes in Wales was formed by the subsidence of a city, whose bells may be sometimes heard beneath the waters.

Earthquakes and volcanoes have wrought more destruction than floods, and tales of buried cities are commoner throughout the Western world than tales of deluges. It is characteristic of them to have a moral. And the "pillar of salt" is paralleled near the sea of Tiberias by a whole bridal procession of young girls turned to jasper columns.

The real historical value of this appalling legend is that it shows the Israelites to have been infested, like Eastern races at the present day, with an odious form of vice, and to have been already profoundly shocked by it. There is an equally repulsive chapter in Judges.

The morality of the times appears, however, to have admitted of the story of Lot's daughters, in a contemptuous way. According to the genealogy, they were the mothers of the Moabite and Ammonite clans. But their conduct, in the estimation of those among whom this legend had its origin and life, implied no depravity, or such a story could not have been tacked on to one that represented Lot as righteous. As a story of tribal origins, it is like that which married Abram to his sister, and

thus expressed the union of related tribes.) But what is now called incest, and was even then forbidden by a series of enactments freshly elaborated, had been common, and even prescriptive, among two great neighbouring peoples. The Pharaohs, divine kings, married their half sisters to preserve the purity of the royal line ; and such close inter-marriage had been preached for a similar end by Zoroaster among the Persians. The Hebrew laws in this matter were directed against other religions than their own ; but it is always to be remembered that these laws were largely new, and that among the Jews themselves it was still the duty of a man to take the place of a brother who had died childless. Family pride enjoined it, no less than did the law that gave this kind of pride expression. Perhaps in the case of Lot's daughters a similar piety was thought a little ridiculous when the story grew, but it was not immoral.

It might have been expected that a southern legend should be the darkest, as this of Sodom is. In Judæa there were the sterner morals. But there is yet another characteristic of the southern myths and legends absent from those of Israel. The story of Paradise, that of the buried cities, and that also of the confusion of tongues, are all attempts to account for natural phenomena. The earlier immigrants, notably the tribes of Reuben, Judah, and Levi, united first by David, seem to have belonged to a separate stock from the later.

~~It~~ It appears that the picturesque romance of Babel owes its present form to the Exile no less fully than do those re-edited myths which taught something, or exalted national pride.

Little of it, indeed, can be traced with confidence to the early rolls, and no such ancient Babylonian myth has come to light yet. There may well have been one; but it cannot have been attached to the famous tower, which was a temple of Bel. Herodotus saw this tower about the time when the Exile ended. He describes it among the wonders of Babylon. It had stood long unfinished; but Nebuchadrezzar had restored it, as he has recorded in an inscription found at Borsippa. If there was, in fact, an old myth current, it would appear that the captives identified this tower as that impious building of early times whose top was to have reached to heaven. Or it may have suggested the story. Its height was 300 feet, less by 234 feet than that of old St. Paul's before the fire of London, and there were many temples like it; but those naïve sojourners in a strange land had seen no such pile. It was built in stages, with an external winding staircase from one stage to another, and a chapel on the summit, in addition to the main place of worship. In this chapel, which contained a golden table and a covered bed, a high priestess is said by the Greek historian to have slept alone.

When, if ever, an older form of the myth is discovered, it will be interesting to see if a god comes down to earth to inspect his creatures' handiwork, and then consults with other gods to see what should be done about it. Scholars venture to surmise that such a myth may have accounted for the dispersal of mankind, but not for the variety of their languages.



## CHAPTER XI

### JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

ONE of the most remarkable results of scholarship, working upon the ancient documents and ruins of the East, has been to put it beyond question that Egypt had a comparatively slight influence upon Jewish history. It is for this reason that little has had to be said yet about Egypt.

The fact must disconcert old notions. Jewish literature, whether in the Bible or out of it, implies that to Babylonia and Phœnicia nothing was due ; while, on the other hand, it states that, as a sequel of Joseph's viziership, the tribes of Israel inhabited Egypt during 430 years, that they were miraculously delivered by Moses, and that God's law was revealed to this leader in the course of a journey like that of Ezra and his "remnant."

There is no longer any doubt that Egypt had once for a time ruled Western Syria, as Alexander was to rule it later from the same base. Monuments attest this. Between 1600 and 1350 B.C. the god-kings of a particularly warlike Egyptian dynasty, known as the Hyksos, conquered parts of Syria, and one of them, Thutmosis III, made its lesser kings pay tribute as far as the Euphrates. Their hold upon it was often shaken, but expedition after expedition re-affirmed their strength for two centuries. The very first of these rulers took

possession of both Canaan and Phœnicia proper, and after them the kings of another dynasty kept Palestine at least for 150 years longer. So long as Palestine was held, the intervening country must have been ; and this includes the hilly deserts which some of the tribes appear to have inhabited. Moreover, it is clear that the settlement in Canaan went on as the Egyptian hold slackened.

But it is equally clear that Egypt did not impose her civilization on these provinces.

Although the Egyptians were themselves mainly Semites, hardly a trace of their religion, of their myths and legends, or of names current among them, has remained there to tell of it. A stele of Rameses II has been found east of the Jordan, and it was undoubtedly set up to be worshipped ; but, as the famous tablets found at Tel el Amarna show, vassal kings at Jerusalem sent their loyal letters to Egypt in the cuneiform script of Babylonia.

Even so, there is nothing improbable in the story that a Jewish slave should at some time have come to be the greatest man in Egypt next to the Pharaoh. The tablets show that a Canaanite was "first speaker" to His Majesty Amenhotep III, and there are records of Amorites being chief armour-bearer and an important priest under an earlier monarch. Still less unlikely is it that the common people of the conquered provinces should have sometimes found the Egyptian rule oppressive. They were enslaved for city building and works of canalization. Rameses II, in particular, is known by inscriptions to have used them in making a canal through the barren land of Goshen. He is conjectured to be the Pharaoh of the oppression.

He not only made a valley fruitful with forced labour, but colonized it with Syrians; and among these there is mention of the "Apuri," or "Habiri," who, it is thought, may have been Jews. But Egyptian excavations and researches, covering the reigns of all the Hyksos kings and their successors in Syria, have brought to light no hero who can with confidence be identified either as Joseph or as Moses.

However, it will not surprise the reader who has come so far to be told that the story of Joseph and his brethren is unhistorical. Textual criticism makes this very clear. Like all the rest, it is a folk-tale adapted to the large purpose of a literature.

This is what makes it fascinating. The story is one of the best known in the world because of its romantic and simple interest; and the proofs that it is a story, and no mere chronicle, were not needed by anyone who can appreciate its quality well. It has the peculiar charm and character of all good folk-tales. To what is this inimitable quality due? It is due to that very independence of actual events, but not of life, which leaves unlettered minds free to imagine events easily and simply, with an entire belief in the reality of the personages that have seized their imagination. No such belief is reached by a novelist. However real his people may come to be in his mind, he knows that they are creations, and therefore, unlike the repeater of folk-tales, he directs a conscious art to the invention of convincing circumstances, prosaic or engaging. The unconscious art of the other is an effort to tell a true story more clearly than he has heard it. He is

not doubted, but the true story must be told worthily, or nobody will listen to him; and he tells it worthily in just that measure in which he is sincere about it.

The romantic interest and the detail are equally natural. It cannot be other than a lifelike story.

Among the personal stories in Genesis this of Joseph is alone well developed and delightful on large lines. That of Rebekah is equally idyllic, but comparatively slight. The stories of Abram and Jacob are quaint merely. That of Isaac and his sons is a tribal romance of curious interest, but not beautiful. Others have a sinister aspect. The growth of the Joseph story demands more attention than any of these can claim on grounds of popularity.

It is so much a better story than the others, and deals so strictly with real life, that one asks if it can possibly have been produced in the same circumstances with them. It is so correct in the account it gives of some Egyptian institutions—in what story-tellers call atmosphere and environment—that one has to wonder at it. If this story were true, and if it had come down as it stands to the age that saw it taken into the Pentateuch, the question would be, Must it not have been a written story from the first? How else could it have been preserved so well? Is it conceivable for a moment that, repeated only from mouth to mouth for a thousand years—repeated for most of that time by a people who knew nothing of Egypt, a people so ignorant and simple as these tribesmen were—the story could have continued so correct? Would they have remembered just the essential details of

that unknown environment and atmosphere? No, it must have been a very early writing.

But, if it were, we should still have to ask, Why was there no other tale like it? Its unique merit and character would be all the more remarkable. We could only infer that in Egypt itself, long before the days of Moses, a stage of very high culture was reached among those "rulers over Pharaoh's cattle," Joseph's brethren and their descendants; and that, although no other trace of such a culture remains, and nothing like it was reached again during that thousand years, a manuscript was treasured untouched all through their desperate wanderings in the wilderness and wars of settlement, to be handed down safely although the very ark of the covenant was lost! No manuscript known of would have had such an adventurous charmed life. No people so savage and unsettled would ever have had such a manuscript to admire and care for. The story would be by far the most remarkable piece of literature in the world.

"It would not lessen the wonder to admit that an original manuscript, growing illegible and archaic from time to time, must have been re-copied; or that a story so much admired must have been re-copied often. Who was there to do the work? There might just possibly have been lettered priests; but, if so, they were not such priests as we know of. They were priests so little convinced of the importance of their sacred lore, or interested to give it an importance, as to spend far more time on a long secular tale because it was delightful than in what they ought to have been doing. They

preserved it while scamping with brief mention the most awful and important events. This explanation will not do.

How, then, did the story come to be written at such length ever, and how was its Egyptian colouring made so true? If it is not a true story, what truth is there in it? Is there any?

The first thing to note is that this is a story from the northern province. In Israel, as we have seen, there was in pre-exilic times a literature so different from the Judean that, even on the fragments of it selected by Judean editors, we have to think that it might almost have been the product of another race with some of the same traditions. Certainly this northern people had a different culture—less moral, but also less vividly superstitious; more lax, but not so savage. This may well have been a more civilized culture in the modern sense. Some scholars, erroneously thinking of religion as the only means of Jewish development, have had to suppose, in the alternative, that the northern collection of legends was not so old as the southern, although its compilation ceased a century sooner, when Samaria fell. But the guess ignores another and natural explanation. Israel was in contact with Damascus, a great seat of civilization.

From the time of Solomon down to that of Samaria's overthrow Damascus was the true capital of Syria. The great trade routes between the Mediterranean world and Asia lay through it, and made it a home of commerce and the arts. Some of them lay also through the northern province. It is true that the Israelites remained for the most part a rural race; but these facts

account sufficiently for the difference between them and the Judeans. They prized a different kind of story.

Now, the chief settlers in the north had been what may be called the Joseph tribe, the tribe of which Joshua (another form of the name) was said by tradition to have been the war leader, and with which the ark appears to have travelled up from Musri. Joseph was a national hero. He was this before the Judeans made one of Abram, his reputed great-grandfather.

But was there ever such a man in actual life? Was Joseph anything more than an old clan-name, a peg for legends?

It is quite doubtful. Certainly there was never such an actual family of brothers as the sons of Jacob. They are clan-names beyond question. One of the simplest of many proofs of this is that they were placed by the earliest narrators, roughly, in an order of seniority determined by the clans' repute. Their rank as brothers depends on the order in which the tribes had arrived in Canaan, or come into being and prominence there, or been found in possession and adopted. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, said to be the elder brothers and sons of Leah, were the southern tribes and first arrivals. Benjamin, the youngest brother, said to be a son of Rachel like Joseph himself, was a northern tribe that distinguished itself in the later wars of Joshua—that first obtained recognition then as a special company of trained warriors. Its name is topographical: Ben-jamin, freely translated, means "the southern"; that is to say, this tribe so recognized was the most southern in Israel, the tribe in

immediate touch with Judea further south. Asher, unimportant in the list, was a tribe wholly or partly Phœnician. The "brother" of this name was ingeniously said to be a son of Leah's maid Zilpah. Issachar and Zebulun were also probable adoptions into the Israelitish nation that was formed as the result of wars and treaties.

Realistic though the story is, we have still to deal with legend.

It is evident that, at some time after the period of wars and settlements, Joseph, the national hero of the Israelites, was provided by them with his company of brothers. But this was at least two hundred years after forced labour may have been done by Israelites in Goshen; and a correct knowledge of things Egyptian—of government and court usages—can hardly have survived in popular knowledge so long. For the story was a folk-story, and not then a written one in fact. It is found, like the rest of the legends embodied in Genesis, to have existed in writing no earlier than the eighth or ninth century B.C.

The question is, then, Did any subsequent generation gain a sufficient knowledge of Egypt to give it verisimilitude? And there is another question. Why did southern chroniclers, being priests, think so highly of a non-religious northern story as to let it occupy nearly a third of their sacred "book of origins"?

The whole enigma grows simple under textual criticism. The story was northern; but, when Judean priests combined the two sets of legend-rolls after the fall of the northern kingdom in 721, its popularity had already made it a southern story



also. They had it in their own collection. Why not? It contained an honourable mention of Reuben as the brother who had saved Joseph's life; it contained the famous "blessing of Jacob," which gave due importance to the elder sons; and it was a link between the patriarchs and both the kingdoms.

The evidence of rather unskilful combination is plentiful. Even uncritical readers notice the confusion of Reuben with Judah, and of two versions of the way in which Joseph came to be taken as a slave into Egypt. The northern story was that Joseph was hated for his dream, that Reuben persuaded the brothers to throw him into a dry well alive instead of killing him, and that Midianite merchants found him there and stole him. The Judean story said, diversely, that he was hated because his father made him a coat with sleeves (not many colours; that is a mistranslation), such as a boy born to rule and not to labour would have worn; that Judah saved him; and that he was sold to Ishmaelites. In southern estimation Judah was the principal figure, as his tribe was the most important tribe. And there are other contradictions. In one place Joseph is only twelve years younger than the eldest son, in another he is born to Jacob in old age. He is put in prison at the instance of Potiphar's wife (a Judean incident), and he is only there as a custodian of two Egyptian prisoners, officers of the king's household. It is Reuben who gives a pledge that he will bring Benjamin, but Judah who fulfils the pledge.

Now, the story glorified Joseph above all the Judean ancestors; but it is evident that, when the

northern kingdom had ceased to exist, there could be no resentment on that score, even if popular acceptance of the story had not already made him pre-eminent. But there was at once a new reason why the services of a Jewish hero to Egypt should be remembered eagerly.

While Sennacherib's armies threatened, Egypt seemed the only power to save Judea from the Assyrian arms. True, Egypt made no proffer. True also that, when she did move, in Pharaoh Necho's time, it was against Judea as well as against the power that had made Judea subject. King Josiah was beaten at Megiddo; and Necho, like Thutmosis III, went on to the Euphrates. But for four years only. Egypt and Assyria both had to reckon soon with Babylon; and then Judea, a fighting ground of three great nations, was driven to long for Egypt's help once more by fear of Nebuchadnezzar. In all these troubled years the prophets might proclaim, as they did consistently, that safety lay in sacrifice to Yahwe; shrines of Baal might be destroyed and children pass through the fire to Molech, lord of hosts; but kings and statesmen could not feel at ease. There may also have been Egyptian embassies. We know, in any case, that in the last resort many Jews fled to Egypt. There is even an apocryphal legend that the aged prophet Jeremiah was carried there for safety, and died there.

That there were Jews well acquainted with Egyptian institutions in the fifth century B.C. is therefore certain. During or after the long Exile some of them—perhaps all of them—returned to their own land; and it must have been now that the old

story of Joseph and his brethren, which they believed to be history, was purged of any unlikely details.

This is the critical conclusion. It is reached by examining Hebrew literature as a human product like any other, with strict reference to facts and probabilities; by restoring the course of events, and assuming that men have always had motives proper to their circumstances; by adopting at every point the likely and not the unlikely supposition. In this way scholarship enables us to see that neither the true colouring nor the unwonted length of the story is surprising. Events had clearly given it new importance. What a treasure it must have been for the returning captives, with their law of Moses shaped in Babylon, and their ignorance of the real past! For it showed how Moses, an exile like themselves, had come to have a people to lead into the wilderness. Secular it might be, but they could have no wish that it were shorter. Indeed, it bears many marks of diligent post-exilic editing and amplification, done so freely that in chapter xlvii, for example, a lively conversation between Joseph and Jacob and Pharaoh has been interpolated. Here there is far more than a framework of genealogy. There is fictional invention, as there had been, less consciously, when the attempt was first made to give a list of brothers.

In other words, this legend continued to grow long after the two old versions of it had been united for Judeans.

Facts of great literary interest explain the interpolation, and must now be stated. The Exile had

immensely raised the level of Jewish culture. We have no longer to suppose that priests alone were engaged in giving written form to the national legends and traditions. There had been a big outburst of poetic creation in Babylonia itself; and, now that a happier life in the old land succeeded, the Jews began to have a varied literature. That which came to be called sacred is only part of what survives, and most of it has perished. The priests themselves were no longer men of a rural simplicity. Presently there came to exist a class of specially learned ones called rabbis, doctors of the law, able editors and expounders.

At first, it is plain, this literature dealt largely with the same material as the sacred books, not yet distinguished from it; and, for the eyes of all who could read, there was an ever-increasing output of teaching matter, as well as of pious poetry and fiction. Commentaries on the temple scriptures, quaintly popular in form, made up a body of lore which came to be known as "midrash." Teaching versions of the legends, anecdotes of historical personages, current fables, and the like, were known as "haggada." It is therefore a needless surmise that the last editors of the Joseph story, by whom such interpolations were admitted into their copies, invented these themselves. They would find passages of the kind in haggadic rolls older than their own day, admire them, and include them without much debate. The growth of legend does not cease when writing comes to the aid of faulty memory.

The literary stream of the next four centuries was to reflect broadly, again and again, the

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picturesque life of the nation outside religious circles. Meanwhile this northern legend, even in what appear to have been its earliest elements, indicates a racial faculty of imagination full of promise.

## CHAPTER XII

### MOSES IN EGYPT

It was long the unquestioning tradition of Christendom that the first five books of the Bible had been indited by the actual pen of Moses. It had been the tradition of all Jewry before.

How this idea could gain currency, seeing that the books not only speak of Moses in the third person, but tell of his death, and expressly say (in Deuteronomy) that "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto" him, is hard to imagine. Exploded 250 years ago by the brilliant Jew Spinoza, it may be met with still throughout Europe and Mohammedan countries. No value the most fanciful attaches to it; but in all such matters of traditional thought about the Bible there has been a shy and obstinate mistrust of good sense, a preference for mystery, and much intellectual cowardice.

Probably it is now the belief of all but experts that Moses was at least the author of the laws ascribed to him. This most famous legislator-priest, this picturesque prophet of a people destined to emerge from obscurity, seems too strong a figure not to have lived; and, whatever be thought of the magic powers he owned, of the awful phenomena of Sinai, or of many other strange events in his life-story, Jews and Christians alike regard him as the great architect of Hebrew legislation.

He was not this, at any rate. Indeed, the strict historical evidence for his existence is no stronger than that for the existence of Joseph. How should it be? We are looking back more than three thousand years into the dim half-light of an eastern people's origins. But if there had been no such priest of a new religion, how could it have come into being? Though there is no biography, it would be inept and fallacious to conclude at once that Moses was a myth. All that can be shown is that the figure he has in this literature was built up gradually, like others, and that the merest skeleton of priestly law (something that was not even the decalogue as we know it) came with the tribe of Joseph into Canaan.

What remains to us in the place of that august but imaginary figure? By all means let it be stripped of the necromancer's robe in which young religions of the past have seen their priests. Away with the magic staff and all the paraphernalia; and let us not regret too much the fictitious grandeur in which this figure was clothed by popular and priestly reverence. Something of real grandeur should appear. If we reach some true conception of a great religious leader, a man among men, such simple gauds can well be spared.

Alas that scholarship should be first of all conscientious! It disregards our hopes and wishes with its own, and it has left little more of Moses than an inference, a shadow. The compensation is not a real figure, it is a real chapter of history, in which other figures take his place; not exact knowledge of what may have happened in Egypt and the deserts, but new light upon what happened

in Palestine much later ; not evidence of a momentous revelation given to men suddenly, or by the mouth of one prophet, but the great romance of a religious dawn. The many makers of the Pentateuch threw back into the past their own ethics. The figure they imagined is still imposing as their ideal, and its vestures are significant. But so long as it was believed that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or gave the law, this wonderful chapter of history was a sealed book without meaning.

We have to ask, What were the beginnings of Jewish religion? It is not enough that they are to be found in superstition and magic. Whether men choose to think that it grew out of these like a new plant from decaying soil, or to say that they gave the actual seed for it—that it is, in fact, an evolution from old growths, preserving some of their character—the question is this: When did the Jews first hear of their hill deity, and how did they begin to worship him in another way than rival gods were worshipped?

Presumably it was not in Egypt. Neither a religious leader, nor any Jews who did the will of Rameses, nor any favoured "cattle-rulers" of a previous monarch, can, so far as we know, have found a hill-god in Egypt. None was known to the Egyptians. However his name is derived, whether from that of Ea, the father of Marduk, or otherwise, hill-gods are known only, in this part of the world, among peoples of Babylonian culture. But Jews may have worshipped him before any Egyptian captivity.

Now, what is the independent evidence that bears, or may be thought to bear, upon the Biblical



stories of a captivity and a conquest of Canaan? Habiri worked for Rameses II, and the Habiri referred to on page 79 may have been, or included, Hebrew. There are also inscriptions which appear to say that Jews had sought pasturage in the borders of Egypt seventy-five years earlier, in the reign of Thutmosis III, who over-ran Syria. They mention tribes called Ishpal and Yakbal, whose names have been translated with much probability "Joseph-el" and "Jacob-el"—the J is, of course, to be pronounced I or Y. On the other hand, it is almost certain that there were Israelitish tribes in Palestine before the conquest described by these stories. The king who followed Rameses immediately has left inscriptions to the effect that at some time (whether in his reign or even earlier they do not say) Egypt had laid waste in Palestine "the people of Isiraal."

We know that, speaking generally, the conquest was the result of a migration from the south—from Musri, in north Arabia. And if Ishpal and Yakbal represent the tribes of Joseph and Jacob, who are known as the Rachel tribes, then, so far as they are concerned, the migration, or part of it, may well have been from Egypt itself. But we do not know that the followers of Moses, if he was indeed the leader of an exodus from that country, could have learned to worship Yahwe there.

This question of the origin of Yahwe-worship would be the real problem of Moses, if it could be shown without question that the names of the god and the priest appear together. In any case, it is evident that, without the worship, there would have been no legend of him. The worship is a

fact. The name of Yahwe is a fact. If they can be accounted for, so, probably, can he. They have not been accounted for ; but there is, at least, one interesting conjecture which may be mentioned. It is based upon the fact of an Egyptian patronage of those pasture-seekers by Thutmosis III, and might account for the name, though not for the god. This, however, is all that matters ; for the history of early religions is full of instances in which gods have changed their names. Bel was called also Marduk ; Ishtar, Anunitu ; and Yahwe himself was for a time to be known as Molech. If, then, a hill-god was worshipped by Israelites or other Jews before the Egyptian captivity, he may have been known under a name that is remotely prehistoric and irrecoverable. The new name and Moses may have appeared together.

That it was formerly Ea is quite unlikely. Far from being a hill-god, Ea was the Babylonian god of an abyss, a god of hidden knowledge. And, once more, there were no hill-gods in the Egyptian pantheon.

But the first king of that Egyptian dynasty under which the Joseph and Jacob tribes appear to have sought pasturage for their flocks and herds in Egypt was named Ah-mosé or Yah-mosé, and it has been said that the Egyptian kings were gods. Ah-mosé or Yah-mosé, then, was a king-god. He and his successors of the same house were worshipped ; and they seem to have ruled temperately. When they were dispossessed of the throne it was not by a popular movement, it was by an invasion.

Now, the herdsmen whose tribes are named Ishpal and Yakbal, and who are fabled to have

been the posterity of Joseph-el and Jacob-el, ancestral god-men, found asylum with a friendly ruler. They must have settled under him and been content. There was nothing of the nature of a captivity until much later, when the legend has it that their descendants wished to withdraw and could not. By that time there was a new and alien dynasty; a Pharaoh had arisen who "knew not Joseph." If the identification of Ishpal and Yakbal is correct, therefore, this legend, like so many others, may reflect the fortunes of a tribe in the imagined story of an individual.

We have to ask, What god did these Israelites probably worship during their long residence in Egypt, when they must have come to regard themselves as naturalized Egyptian subjects?

They would be expected to join in the Egyptian worship of their patron, and it is practically certain that they did so. Then came Rameses, who oppressed them; and it may be supposed, very plausibly, that when they vaguely remembered the hill-god of a more ancient worship offered in freedom, this god, though not nameless, was only made their pretext for a demand that they should be allowed to leave a country they had voluntarily entered. Their god for the time being would still be Yah-mosé, whom they dared not name.

The legend says that the Israelites asked leave of Pharaoh to make a three-days' journey into the wilderness, there to hold a feast in honour of their god. However veiled, this was a demand for separation, and, if made, it must have been resisted.

Moreover, their leader was named Mosé—this being the ancient and correct form of Moses. Then,

or later, he was the reputed son, or son by adoption, of a princess of the Yah-mosé line. Legend has attached to this adoption a story which is paralleled by that of Sargon of Agadé, and indeed by stories of Greek, Roman, German, and even Japanese heroes; but we are not obliged to shut out the possibility that in some way, by adoption or by blood, Moses was connected with the dispossessed dynasty. Their crest was precisely that serpent which he is said to have set up in the wilderness. A leader there must have been, and why not such a man? He is presented from the first as a man behaving with authority—killing a tyrannous Egyptian, stopping a quarrel between two Israelites, and playing knight-errant to the daughters of a priest in the very region into which he afterwards led out the captives. Legend invests its heroes' lives with wonderful circumstances, but is not careful to invent convincing character-touches. When these appear they are sometimes significant.

Later, it is true, legend invented for Moses a levitical parentage; but, significantly, it at first stopped short of naming his father and mother. The lateness of the invention might be guessed from that circumstance alone; for, if their names had been known in his own time, they would scarcely have been forgotten by a race that has always been heedful of genealogies.

Assuming his royal origin, the theory accepts also the statement that he had joined the family of the hill-priest, and, for his part, had become also a priest of the hill-god whom the Israelites had formerly worshipped. But such a leader, when he appeared among them, would be thought of

more highly than the hill-god himself. If of royal blood, he would be *ipso facto* divine; and, as a magician, he claimed indeed to exercise what were anciently regarded as divine powers. The Israelites bered the hill-god of whom he proclaimed himself the emissary, but he was a representative of their adopted god Yah-mosé. Did he, in fact, sacrifice to Yah-mosé as the hill-god in the wilderness? Is the name Yahwe one which, on this supposition, might be accounted for by linguists?

It is one hypothesis, and it is fascinating. But it rests on very slight and unsure foundations, and if they are disturbed it must fall to pieces like a card-castle.

Dr. Cheyne has built up another on the supposition that Mosé means Musrite, and on the fact that many names in the whole body of legends prove that some of the Jewish tribes had lived in Musri. He holds that Moses is a mythical personage. Another eminent scholar, showing that in numberless cases the legend-makers and the priestly historians mistook this region for Misraim, which is Egypt in the Hebrew tongue, thinks that the whole story of Israel in Egypt may have grown out of that mistake. It is not so strange an error in geography as Alexander's belief that the source of the Nile was in north-west India. Whatever the truth may be, it is certain that priestly editors placed Sinai much farther away from Canaan than the legend-rolls had done. If this line of criticism could be established, so as to show that there was no vestige of truth in the stories of either Moses or Joseph so far as they relate to Egypt, Moses would be a shadow indeed.

It is established only, beyond doubt, that Musri was a region more important in Jewish history than the priestly editors knew, and that, as the home of some of the tribes, it may have been the scene of Yahwe-worship before the days of Moses. In any case, Musri must have known the worship of hill-gods or a hill-god, being a mountainous country. The theory does not account for the god's name, but this may some day be found by Arabian archæologists.

Meanwhile the legend of Moses in Egypt cannot be lightly set aside, or deemed to be wholly misleading as well as fantastic.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DIVINE NAME

ALL speculation about the ancient name of the Jewish hill-god is baffled by a very curious fact. It was thought to be so potent and so holy that it must never be written plainly out, or even pronounced in the hill and temple ceremonies. This fact is not more curious than the explanation of it furnished by the study of early religions, in which such reticences have been and are still common.

Just because the origin of religions is to be found in magic, which they slowly superseded, and because those who practised the magic art had made as much mystery as they could, the name of the Jewish hill-god has not been preserved for us in such a way that we can be quite sure of its pronunciation. Names had been taboo among mankind from immemorial time, and for a reason appealing strongly to the minds of savages. "Unable," says Dr. Frazer lucidly, "to distinguish between words and things clearly, the savage commonly fancies that the link between a name and the person or thing denominated by it is not a mere arbitrary and ideal association, but is a real and substantial bond which unites the two, in such a way that magic may be wrought on a man just as easily from his name as from his hair, his nails, or any other material part of his person. In fact,

primitive man regards his name as a vital portion of himself, and takes care of it accordingly."

Professor Rhys has shown that the Celts and other Aryans believed a name to be that part of a man which is termed the soul, or the breath of life. An Australian black is always very unwilling to tell his name, for fear he may be injured by sorcerers, and passes his life under an alias. An Eskimo will not have his name written down lest he should lose his spirit. Their true names are concealed by the natives of Abyssinia, the Kru negroes of West Africa, the Wolofs of Senegambia, the hill tribes of Assam, the islanders of the Philippines and the East Indies, the Red Indians of Chili and Mexico. It was for fear of magic that Sigurd in the saga refused his name to the dying Fafnir, and that every Egyptian was given a great and a little name at his baptism. Indeed, there is no superstition more widespread than this has been and continues to be; and, as men imagine gods in their own image, subject to like dangers with themselves, they have frequently agreed that divine names also should be taboo.

Thus it is that the birth-names of divine kings are never pronounced in Dahomey, that the proper name of the Emperor of China may be neither pronounced nor written by his subjects, and that it used to be difficult to learn the real name of the King of Siam. In Madagascar the names of dead monarchs are equally under a ban, which is so rigid that words bearing any resemblance to them go out of use. When Taoussi died, the word "taoussi," which means beautiful, was replaced by "senga." "It was everywhere believed," in short,



“that he who possessed the true name possessed the very being of a god or man, and could force even a deity to obey him as a slave obeys his master.” This accounts for the story of Jacob’s demanding the name of a spirit with whom he wrestled; and in modern Egypt “the man who knows the most great name of God can, we are told, by the mere utterance of it, kill the living, raise the dead, transport himself instantly wherever he pleases, and perform any other miracle.”

It may be asked why religion, which saw in magic a formidable rival and forbade it ultimately, invested gods and solemn ceremonies in the same mystery. Religion did so for the same reason that it professed to perform miracles. We have to remember that magic has nowhere suddenly disappeared, and religion taken the place of it like a new and different idea. The practices of magic continue side by side with the ceremonies of religion, as part of them. Magic gives place gradually, as the growing intelligence of men convinces them of its inefficacy. Both magic and religion are mysteries, but the mystery of religion seems the greater. It does so because, while magic assumes that man himself may control nature, religion refers the control of nature to gods. They, it is thought, can do what man fails to do, although they are like him, and are at first human beings, not spiritual conceptions. Their magic is greater than his. The conception of a great Creator Spirit who works by unalterable laws is recent in the world’s history, and the belief in miracle and magic is not yet dead.

There must have been another reason why the priests of a new religion, contending with magi-

cians, forbade the use of their god's name. Magic failed; ~~religion must run no risks of doing so.~~ For in the childish ages of mankind religion, like magic itself, was a serious game of pretending. This is a motive which may endure when the old meaning of taboo is forgotten. So it was that, like some word of magic properties, the name of the Jewish hill-god was so veiled by substitutes that it came to be thought peculiarly sacred, and in the course of many generations to be uncertainly remembered.

Concealment was helped, as time passed, by the Hebrew system of writing. This at first was like the briefest form of phonetic shorthand, in that it represented words by their consonants alone. The great name was written YHW or YHWH. When it came to be vocalized long afterwards, as the whole written language was, the vowels of a divine title—"adonai," meaning lord—or those of "elohim" were inserted to avoid the true sound of the name. The word "Yehowah," which we call Jehovah, was formed in this way. Certainly the scribes were ignorant that adonai was Adonis, formerly a Phœnician god of fertility, and that elohim had once been a plural only, signifying the gods in general; and it is by a coincidence that Jehovah recalls the great name of another god who dwelt upon a hill and controlled the storms—Olympian Jove. Yet if it were one day proved that Jove and Jehovah were in the beginning one and the same deity, as Adonis was both Phœnician and Greek, nobody should feel surprise.

Meanwhile the best authorities on language believe that the earliest pronunciation of the name

of this Semitic Jove was Yahweh ; and if, indeed, the two were shown to be identical, Yahwe must have been so named before an Egyptian king-god bore the name Yah-mosé. It was when the original meaning of the name had been forgotten that some ingenious priest made the guess that it meant "He is." The consonants YHWH were supposed to be those of that phrase, and the deity was made to say himself, "I am that I am." It was in late times, too, and in poetry only, that the god was called Yah.

~~To take the god's name in vain was to use it for magical purposes. This, again, did not become an offence until late in the history ; and Moses was not a priest only, but a magician. That is to say, the legend-makers had this tradition of him, and there is no reason why we should doubt that the earlier priests laid claim to magic powers.~~

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TEN PLAGUES

IF we knew less of history, it might be assumed that the prominence given to magic in the story of Moses showed this to be an older story than that of Joseph, which contains no reference to magic but the mention of dreams and a divining cup. Here is a mighty magician as the credulity of ancient times conceived him. It is true that Moses is not only represented as greater than any of the magicians of Egypt, a far greater nation, but that he is said to work magic by the power of Yahwe, and even, in parts of the story, to announce that it is Yahwe and not he who works it. But the so-called Ten Plagues are all reminiscent of the magic art which preceded religion.

History, however, traces the development of religion from this art itself, and shows magic to have long remained an essential element of it. We know, indeed, that even to-day the association of magic with religion is thought to be essential by many minds.

There can, therefore, be no surprise at the fact, discovered by textual critics in the Book of Exodus, that the latest of three versions of this story, a version made independently by exiled priests in Babylonia, sets a special value on the use by Moses and Aaron of a magical rod, which is not even

mentioned by one of the other versions. The Bible in many places denounces magic and magicians; but it must be constantly remembered that these denunciations applied only to wonders and wonder-workers who were not Yahwists. There was another attitude towards wonders believed to have been done by orthodox persons. They seemed to be proof that the doctrines of Yahwism, as modified from age to age, were orthodox; and, indeed, they furnished the only proof acceptable to simple men. We shall see that there was a perfectly similar endurance of superstition in regard to prophecy, the successor of soothsaying. This continued throughout the lifetime of the Jewish people in Palestine to be a main expression of religious faith; for the prudent Jewish mind, distracted by events and menaces, looked forward always apprehensively, and prophets were a legion. The greatest of them, the clearest-eyed, most earnest, and most eloquent, were leaders in the advance of thought; the rest were "false prophets." But none looked critically back for guidance, as we moderns do; they took their unhesitating flight, like a host of areoplanists before an advancing army, from ground bestrewn with the bodies of their precursors.

As to the magical powers attributed to Moses, it was no concern of either the priesthood in exile or its successors at any time to belittle him by denying them. The contrary is rather true. In their view, such powers must certainly have armed a legendary hero believed to have been the first law-giver of the religion; and this belief, as we have noted, led them to exalt him in good faith

greatly, ascribing to Moses a mass of law which had crystallized during a thousand years.

It remains a curious fact that so late as after the Exile this old legend of the plagues was enriched and pointed by the story of a contest between Moses and the rival magicians of Pharaoh's court.

The story of the rods and serpents was doubtless current in haggada, that widening stream of popular literature from which so much was to be drawn. One of the old collections of legendary rolls, the Judean, had made no mention of either serpents or a rod. The legend embodied in the other represented Moses as using a rod, but is not known to have included the serpent story. If it did not, both the old versions may be said to have been more purely religious than the priestly one, the Judean version greatly so. Now, it has been shown that in material ways religion had gained ground both during and before the Exile. How is this inclusion of a new wonder, if it was indeed new, to be accounted for?

The answer found by scholars is that a larger place in the legend had to be made for Aaron. For the priests especially his was a figure of growing importance. Scholars note that he is hardly named in the old sections which are beyond doubt Judean, and that even when his name appears he does nothing; he is merely there with Moses. Their inference is that his name was probably inserted in these places by the editor who had combined the Judean and the Israelitish legends.

If they are right, he found it in the latter. There Aaron, who seems to have been revered in Israel as the mythical ancestor of the priests at

Bethel or Jerusalem, was mentioned as a brother of Miriam the prophetess, the reputed composer and singer of an old folk-song. True, Joshua, and not he, was said to have been the minister of Moses; true, Moses had sprinkled with his own hands the blood of "the covenant," thus acting as high priest himself; and, more than that, the Israelitish legends included a late one which, directed against idolatry, told of Aaron the story that he had set up a golden calf to represent Yahwe. Those northern legends had not dealt kindly with the reputation of the southern priest. But he was now regarded as the founder of the priestly body. The exiles brought home this tradition of him. In the section they supplied he is described as wearing splendid vestments, as anointed, and as alone entitled once a year to enter the holy of holies in an imagined tabernacle. He is the great representative of the tribe of Levi, so much greater than Korah, a priest of the same tribe, that when the latter claimed to act with the sons of Aaron sacred fire consumed him.

All these circumstances being added to the old legends, it is not strange that the priestly version places a wonder-working rod in Aaron's hand, and no longer in that of the leader—a rod which is to bud miraculously at last, while the rods of other tribal leaders fail to do so, and is thus to give a sign that Aaron and his descendants shall be high priests for ever.

This version of the Exodus legend makes Aaron act as the interpreter, before an Egyptian king, of a leader who had been reared by an Egyptian princess! It could not set him above that hero,

but it did set his next successor in the priestly office above Joshua. When it was in due time combined with the earlier sacred legend books, those paltering editors who failed to reconcile it with them, or them with it, must have deplored the golden calf. They were sadly baffled also by conflicting accounts of the "ten plagues."

It appears that, according to each version, there had been only seven plagues or wonders, not ten ; but that some of them appeared in one, and not in the others. The editors, being reverent men, could only admit them all.

Dr. Cheyne's account of the way in which this discovery was reached makes one of the most interesting chapters of literary criticism. The three versions were disentangled with incalculable patience from a single narrative, by following signs which could only be slight, but which, when at last they had all been recognized and found consistent, were scarcely to be doubted. These signs are not the same plain characteristics as in Genesis. Yahwe has by this time taken the place of Elohim in both the ancient sources ; and the priestly section is not a genealogical framework, but a main surface of the picture. The identifying signs can only be characteristics of purpose, point of view, and style, together with any accidental traits that may accompany these. However, the sufficient characteristics of purpose and point of view are known to us. As between the ancient sources, the northern is the less inclined to represent Yahwe as acting directly, while the later source is inclined to magnify Aaron and the priestly office. With this knowledge to guide them, the critics separate



from the first fourteen chapters of Exodus three groups of passages as follows:—(1) Those in which Aaron is the wonder-worker; (2) those in which Moses is; and (3) those in which Yahwe works wonders without the magic rod of either. It then appears that each group has its own form of words, which hardly varies. The narrative is like a picture worked upon by three painters with differing techniques—different ways of holding the brush and of laying on the colours.

The three forms of words are commonly these:—

1. Then Yahwe said to Moses, say to Aaron, Stretch forth thy rod.....and there shall be.....And they did so, and Aaron stretched forth his rod and there was.....And so did the magicians with their enchantments.....And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as Yahwe had said.

2. And Yahwe said to Moses, Stretch forth thy hand to.....that there may be.....And Moses stretched forth his hand to.....and there was..... But Yahwe made Pharaoh's heart firm, and he was not willing to let them go.

3. And Yahwe said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, Thus saith Yahwe, the god of the Hebrews, Let my people go that they may worship me, and if thou refuse to let them go behold I will .....And Yahwe did so and sent.....And Pharaoh called for Moses and said, Entreat for me that Yahwe cause to depart.....And Moses went out from Pharaoh and cried to Yahwe. And Yahwe did according to the word of Moses, and caused to depart.....But Pharaoh hardened his heart, and did not let the people go.

The differences are quite significant.

Observe that the Judean version, the third, is so much more impressed with Yahwe's power than with Moses and any power of his that it does not trouble to tell what Moses actually said to Pharaoh, or what the answer was. A plague directly follows its announcement, and is then removed at Pharaoh's instance and Moses' intercession. The point made is that Pharaoh hardens his heart in spite of *clemency*.

The Israelite version shows his heart firm in spite of *magic*.

The priestly version, making still another point, implies that it was hardened because the rival magicians worked similar wonders.

In other words, there are three conceptions of Yahwe. In the Judean version he does not harden the man-god's heart, but lets Moses see that it is hard ; in the Israelitish one he makes it hard, while at the same time smiting Pharaoh's people ; in the priestly version he prophesies its hardness. They conceive him respectively as forbearing, terrible, and ironical ; and magic is used variously to warn, to punish, and to mock.

These points of view are proper to all that we know of the three sources. The critics find sure ground. And in the separated groups of passages the plagues or wonders are found to be set out as follows :—

<i>Priestly.</i>	<i>Judean.</i>	<i>Israelitish.</i>
1. Rods and serpents		
2. Water into blood	1. Water smitten	1. Water into blood
3. Frogs	2. Frogs	2. Frogs possibly
4. Lice	3. Flies	

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<i>Priestly.</i>	<i>Judean.</i>	<i>Israelitish.</i>
5. Boils	4. Murrain	3. Boils possibly
	5. Hail possibly	4. Hail
	6. Locusts	5. Locusts
		6. Darkness
6. Firstborn die	7. Firstborn die	7. Firstborn die
7. Army drowned		

Combine these lists and seven wonders become ten. But again the differences are instructive, as a little critical comment shows.

The late haggadic writer, knowing more about Egypt than his predecessors, had not made plagues of cattle disease, hail, and locusts, which are not specially Egyptian troubles. His second, third, and fourth wonders are : they follow the order of certain phenomena which recur in Egypt frequently. He was ironical with some rational sense, it seems, and did not allow the rival magicians any feat too difficult for them. His fifth plague, boils, is believed to have meant bubonic sickness, which has been common enough in that country throughout historic time ; but, as the combined narrative neither mentions Aaron in connection with it nor allows the magicians to reproduce it, we cannot tell what use this writer had made of his fifth plague. The same remark applies to the death of the Egyptian first-born, except that here the rival magicians had certainly been baffled. As to the drowning of Pharaoh's army, this writer must clearly have counted it as one of his seven wonders, which the earlier versions do not seem to have done ; and so the Red Sea is parted by Aaron's rod in due course. Probably it was he, after all, who imagined or happily imported the circumstance that "the

magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were upon the magicians." The ironic contest ends disastrously in any case.

It was inevitable that the combining priestly editors should prefer the Judean account to both the others, as far as it went. Not only was its view of Yahwe more impressive than theirs, as these editors may or may not have noticed, but, what was more to the purpose, it was realistic in a way that neither of them equalled. Anyone who takes the trouble to group the passages will remark this immediately. True, the realism was ill-informed, for it is in Palestine, and not in Egypt, that an east wind sometimes brings the devastating locusts; but errors of that sort were not nicely scanned. Nor was it either a fault or a merit in this Judean legend that only the first three visitations were more Egyptian than Palestinian, and only the first two were Egyptian essentially. The realism seemed precious, and nothing else could matter.

In the course of two processes of combination the Israelitish version suffered most, of course. But its impressive plague of the thick darkness that might be felt survives; and this is sufficiently Egyptian, for darkness may be caused either by sandstorms or by locusts, as well as by an eclipse of the sun.

The most interesting result of the analysis is to suggest that there may have been some truth in an old tradition. If none of the tribes had had acquaintance with the Nile, how did it happen that the legends of water turned into blood, of multitudinous rotting frogs, and of a great fly pest, gained currency in Judea, and the first of them—

perhaps all of them—in Israel too? They describe things that do happen in Egypt, and do not happen in the hilly countries where the tribes settled. The Nile changes colour towards the end of June as the effect of muddy floods, and “in eight or ten days it has turned,” says a modern observer, Professor Maspero, “from greyish-blue to dark red, occasionally of so intense a colour as to look like newly-shed blood.” Frogs would enormously multiply, perish, and rot if at any time the ibis were rare; and there are bad visitations of the mosquito, the sand-fly, and even the tsetse. Is it conceivable that unassisted imaginations could hit upon the notion in particular of water turned to blood? Moreover, the fish of the Nile die in great numbers, though not in flood-time, but when the river is low. Is it even likely that such a legend, the growth of which is to be accounted for by that love of the marvellous which ignorance displays, should have been imagined in the beginning without some natural provocation?

The correct inference appears to be that which other evidence might warrant—that one or more of the tribes had been in fact Egyptian captives, and some at least of their people had lived in the heart of that country, and so had seen the Nile. They would bring away strange stories of it. This of the bloody waters, and all they told of the ills that Egypt suffered from, would form, no doubt, a basis for the religious thought of Yahwe’s great deliverance and revenge.

In its primitive form the legend would be simple, and its plagues few and proper. But if Dr. Cheyne be right, and other tribes had come from Musri or

Misrim (mistakable for Misraim, which is Egypt), and if, besides, the savage rite of firstborn sacrifice had there been left behind, then, as the tribes mingled, and as their legends intertwined about the figure of Moses (Musrite or Egyptian), that of the Exodus would take new bulk. Nor is it strange that the plagues should come to number seven. Of all the arbitrary numbers revered by this Oriental race, seven was the most important. In ancient Babylonia it had been sacred; for there were seven known planets, each of which represented a god. Mathematics itself was a sacred science, because it was concerned first of all with the sun, moon, and stars. This most sacred number, then, made itself up wherever possible. It accounts for the week, the seven heavens, the seven lamps of the golden candlestick and of Ruskin, and all the sevens of the Apocalypse. Seven plagues, in an ascending order of severity, were far more worthy of respect than eight or six, though hail and murrain were calamities of Canaan. But ten was a sacred number too. One meets it in the ten camels of Abram's servant, the bracelets of ten shekels' weight given to Rebekah, the ten princes of Israel, and the shadow going backward ten degrees. It suggested tithes. There seems even to have been some idea of completeness in it. Ten plagues satisfied this notion.

The mind of the haggadic writer who had shaped the story of rods and serpents, and that of the priests who found it good, were at a stage of development still familiar. It is worth attention, as helping us to understand the feeble dawn of scepticism.

Living either in Babylonia, where the fear of

evil spirits had made of life a tyranny of minute and conscientious superstition, or more probably in Egypt, where it was also rife, this writer saw his fellow-dues imposed upon, and must have learned to deny religious value to tricks of pious jugglery by which both they and he were impressed. There was one practised by snake-charmers. By means of hypnotism, if modern travellers may be trusted (but they are not critical experts in legerdemain), snake-charmers are sometimes able to benumb and stiffen the snakes they carry about with them. The snake-staves of Cyprus, which are said to have belonged to sorcerers, may very well have been among the insignia of men who practised this mysterious art. Even for those who see it nowadays without reverence, the feat is weird. So it must have been for this old writer, who could not rank it as a natural phenomenon, because, in his view, there were no such phenomena; the world was ruled by spiritual agents acting wantonly, and not by laws. He refused to acknowledge the religious claim made with it, but was yet obliged to believe in this and greater miracles. The unconscious irony of his story came of swallowing the gnat with the camel.

The priestly editors, for their parts, cannot have shared his touch of rational sense, or suspected it. They blended the sources without reflection. This work was done, indeed, so uncritically that in chapter ix of the book of Exodus all the cattle of Egypt die in the sixth verse, and there are still cattle to be destroyed by hail and fire in the twenty-second. The realism they prized failed to make them realists.

It is evident, then, that we are still in a primitive age after the Exile. If the superstition and credulity of men were not a sufficient proof of this, their conception of a deity would attest it. While Yahwe was variously imagined by the legend-makers, they agreed in one particular: he was a god so destitute of either justice or pity that he had afflicted a whole people with terrible ills because their king was obstinate, and this in spite of the fact that he himself, according to one of the versions, caused the king's obstinacy. The character of the old gods was not that of those who made and worshipped them; it magnified their savagery as well as their good meanings; but it was never quite another character than theirs. Men did make gods in their own image. Moreover, it was impossible that Yahwe, the god of a nation, should have a tenderness for men as individual foreigners, or, indeed, for individual men at all unless they were his loyal ministers. In the beginning he was chiefly a war god. The notion of him was to change as Israel's national aspirations weakened, and their religion to become as much a meticulous affair of personal safety for some of them as Babylonian witchcraft was; but in any event they were a chosen people, and loved to pore upon traditions of it.

Of such traditions this of Egypt and the Exodus was the most convincing, and that which best enabled them to forget their recent wound.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE RED SEA AND SERBONIS

THE devastation wrought by learning among our old idols is ruthless. Learning may either throw them down with Dagon, of whom there was only the stump left, or eat into them like a dry rot. Some have clean vanished, as green crops vanish under any plague of locusts. Some leer with altered faces; they are not our idols any longer. If there is little left of Moses or of Aaron, and the exodus from Egypt remains an uncertain and relatively small event, what becomes of its most picturesque and jubilant climax, the miraculous passage of the Red Sea? Can we spare that? How often has it not been painted and descanted on? Is there any picture to match it in scenic grandeur among the lore of antiquity?

One may have to admit that there was a flaw in its imposing realism; like Alexander, the sacred writers appear to have been out in their geography. But such a flaw is pardonable, and not disastrous.

It amounts to this: not that the Red Sea is deep for a miraculous crossing, but that its northern extremity is much too far south to be reached from Goshen in a journey of three days, such as the tribes asked leave to make, and is, moreover, not on the way to Horeb or the Promised Land. The Egyptian Goshen lies east of the Nile Delta, in

Lower Egypt, and they were "thrust out" of it with great urgency, presumably by the nearest way. The statement that God, nevertheless, "led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that (way) was near, for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt"—that statement is irreconcilable not only with a hasty exit, but with the strange detour. They might have travelled by the near way 150 miles at least before Philistia threatened. The flaw was evident long ago, but it obliged nobody to think the narrative untrue. So long as we were able to take it as history, passing its errors lightly over with its magical circumstances, we could hope that somewhere, some day, Pharaoh's chariots might be dug up, to testify beyond all doubt to a famous overthrow.

Is that a hope to be quite abandoned? And, if not, where should explorers dig for Pharaoh's chariots?

He would be a dreadful sort of Dry-as-dust who asked us if this really mattered. Certainly it matters. One may desire to have news of those chariots without believing in Aaron's rod or the heaped-up waters. It is absolutely no discouragement of such a hope to be told that there are two stories, in one of which there is the rod and an angel, in another a strong east wind. Did anything happen or not?—that is the question; and, if so, where? Show us the truth in a flourishing fiction—the seed from which it sprang—and, though it be only a grain of mustard-seed, we can content ourselves. Destroy the fiction root and branch, and we must cherish it. In either case it was a fine creation of men's minds.

Alas, the critics point out other flaws in this one, too numerous.

Not only is the narrative of the Book of Exodus not history, but it is not even a single legend preserved in varying forms. It is an old medley of legends, conflicting so that they cancel each other out, or, as in a chemical combination, form a new one. We insist, and perhaps we are unreasonable. Seeing how the tribes came together, each with a floating lore of its own; seeing that centuries passed before such folk-tales crystallized; seeing also that the process went on after this for at least 500 years—it may be too much to ask of scholarship that early facts should be inferred with any confidence.

More light than darkness, after all, has been thrown upon the story of the Red Sea crossing. First, it appears not to have been a Red Sea crossing at all. The piece of water crossed is in Hebrew Yam Suph, and this name, although it was that of the distant Red Sea in later days, means Sea of Water-plants or Sea of Reeds. The Red Sea has no conspicuous water-plants; but north of it there is a chain of marshy lakes where water-plants in plenty grow. Some of them were known even to the untravelled tribesmen, for they were near the main road from Asia into Egypt, at a point which Asur-bani-pal called in one of his inscriptions the Gate of the East. They would lie in the path of any normal exodus. There is one of them exactly east of Goshen, and there are others a little way north and south. The Suez Canal runs through them. Now, it would not be strange if they were called seas by a people who had never seen the

ocean ; or that the unseen Gulf of Suez, the Red Sea, should have been supposed to be one of them by a people who had moved quite away from the region. Their own lake in the Jordan Valley was called The Sea, though they knew of another which the Phœnicians sailed upon.

Whether, then, the crossing was a real or an imaginary event, the earliest tradition of it told of a piece of shallow water grown or fringed with reeds, and known by name for that distinctive feature.

The crossing may have been real enough. There is not the least difficulty in imagining a rational story—a pursuit across marshy ground, as imprudent on the part of such pursuers as the retreat which lost King John his regalia and much else in the English Wash. On the other hand, one of these marshes has an evil name connected with at least one such disaster, and may have suggested the legend. It is the Serbonian Bog.

Every schoolboy knows the name of this morass, which Milton made the most celebrated in the world, picturing his Stygian hosts in—

A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog  
Betwixt Damiata and Mount Casius old  
Where armies whole have sunk.

But history knows only what was written of it by Strabo and Pliny, and geography that it has now dried up. Those authors, who are poor authorities for facts, wrote as late as the first years of our own era ; but it seems to be a fact that stories had long gathered about Lake Serbonis.

One story was that an ancient king of Jerusalem had perished in it with his forces, a king who bore

the local name of the lake itself, Sebakhot Barduil. Now, a name of which the true history is unknown may itself give rise to a legend. No such king has been traced ; and Sebkha, as we know nowadays, is the common name for a salt lake along the coast of the Mediterranean on the other side of Egypt. So much for "Sebakhot." Was there ever a king of Jerusalem named Barduil—or Bardo-el? We do not know. But if ever there was, the legend is old indeed—older than the Exodus—for there can have been no king of that name in Jerusalem except in Canaanitish days.

However, that is not the essential question, though it may be answered some day. The question is whether Strabo's story was current seven or eight centuries before his time or still earlier.

If so, it may just possibly have been the parent legend. Egyptologists have disinterred, in any case, the inscriptions, not of a king of Jerusalem, but of a Pharaoh, who seems to have been named Sebakhotep! He lived 600 years before the date assigned to the Exodus. That is very interesting ; for it is open to anyone to play with the possibilities, and to no one to be dogmatic about them.

Was Lake Serbonis the Yam Suph? Forty years ago a critic named Brugsch tried to prove that the Israelites must have marched by way of it. That was a very different thing from suggesting that they might have heard of that lake, and have joined a legend of it to one of their own. His ingenious method was to identify some ancient place-names in Exodus with modern ones. In particular he noted that Pihahiroth, where the emigrants are said to have encamped by the sea,

was translated in the Peshitta, or Syriac Bible, and probably therefore in the Targum, or Aramaic popular Bible, as "Mouth of the Depths." It lay, says the story, between Migdol and Baal-zephon; and, supposing Baal-zephon to be the temple of Zeus under Mount Casius, the Mouth of the Depths would clearly be the mouth of the Serbonian Bog.

The "proof," at best, was only supposition. Unfortunately, Brugsch did not know where Goshen was, from which the Israelites are said to have started. Its position has been established too far south for him, as it is too far north for the Red Sea.

If we could take any part of the legend to be true, and could be guided by the positions of Goshen and Migdol, which are known, they probably crossed somewhere by a lake which lies directly east. But other parts of it clash hopelessly. Therefore, and in any case, the question still is whether the picturesque narrative had any grain of truth to grow from; and there is so little proof of this that we may be thankful if it is even possible to see how such a legend might have started.

To conclude, then. The Yam Suph was conceivably Serbonis; and this is not to say that Israelites escaping from Egypt may, in fact, have crossed that bog. It is to suggest that the tribes in Canaan may afterwards have heard of it, and must no doubt have heard if its evil name was ancient. For, if escaping Israelites crossed any piece of water at all, it was, according to pre-exilic story, not that (which is on the near way to Canaan), but a lake or river south of it, and somewhere east of Goshen. However, the frailty of legend as historical evidence, the confused and ill-known

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geography, and the lack of all sure corroboration from other sources, leave the Egyptian chapter vague. It is no wonder that little trace of Egyptian influence should be found in Jewish folklore.

Something remains to be stated on this head of the weakness of corroboration. Though the Habiri put to taskwork by Rameses II may have included the tribes of Ishbal and Yakbal, an inscription of Rameses III, cut when Canaan had been settled, mentions Habiri working still in Egypt.

## CHAPTER XVI

### IN THE WILDERNESS

It is time to state more fully the reasons why Dr. Cheyne, and most modern scholars with him, affirm that what is said to have happened in the wilderness represents something very different. For they have discovered not only that all the tribes cannot have been involved in an exodus from Egypt, and that, on the face of it, only the Rachel tribes may, but that the worship of the hill-god had been carried on by other tribes at Horeb before Moses came into the story. Whatever the god's early name may have been, whatever a Moses did for this old deity, whatever the subsequent wars did, these discoveries invalidate the pentateuchal record.

A mistake of the ages must be corrected first. Horeb, or Sinai, is not situated in what has long been known as the Sinaitic Peninsula. The devotions of pilgrims for many centuries, and of Messrs. Cook's tourists in our day, have been offered at the wrong shrine.

It was in Midian, according to the earliest legends, that the hill of Yahwe stood. Midian is in Musri, 300 miles nearer to Canaan. The border of Edom, which includes Midian, is only, in fact, fifty miles south of Beersheba; and the site has not been hidden. Its position is plainly stated. True, the statement is also contradicted; and, if



the contradiction has been accepted by the Christian world, it had been accepted by the Jewish world first. There was no means of knowing the truth about rival sites till criticism found out how to separate the earlier from the later writings, and saw that the site which has been so long venerated was a post-exilic one.

The mistake is one of many that seem to have been due simply to an enlarged notion of Jewish history. It immensely lengthened the wilderness journey, but there is a possible excuse for it. There were no maps; we have seen that the exiles did not possess the legend-rolls; and Sinai had to be guessed. Guessed it evidently was, and, as always happens in folklore, the later notion swamped the earlier.

It did so although those rolls were restored to them. The case is clear. The legends have it that, when Moses fled after killing the Egyptian, he found a friend and a wife in Midian; and there at Horeb, according to one of them, he saw the burning bush and first heard the voice of Yahwe. "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt," said the god, "ye shall serve Yahwe upon this mountain." The people were brought forth, and wanted water; whereupon Yahwe commanded, "Go on before.....and take with thee the rod wherewith thou smotest the river. Behold, I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock." There the people worshipped, and there Moses met again his wife and his father-in-law.

That is the Israelitish story. The Judean calls the mountain Sinai; but here also—in Numbers

and in Judges—there are the Midianitish father-in-law and wife, with the added information that she was a Cushite woman (translated Ethiopian in error), which comes to the same thing, Cush and Midian being near neighbours. It is doubtless the same mountain.

This had been assumed, indeed, by all who placed the mountain far away ; or they had thought that Horeb was perhaps the range and Sinai the peak. But astrology accounts for the double name. Sinai means the hill of the moon-goddess Sin ; Horeb the hill of glowing heat, and therefore probably of the sun-god. The names must have been variously given, it may be in different ages, by worshippers of Egyptian and Babylonian culture respectively ; for to the Egyptians and all who shared their civilization the south was the sun's place, to the Babylonians the moon's. People living to the north of this hill—that is to say, either in the "Promised Land" or on its borders, gave it these names because they were swayed by both civilizations.

It is significant, therefore, that Horeb should be the name in the Israelitish rolls, which have most of the Egyptian stories. We have always to remember that Yahwism developed. It was not always what we see it, even at the earliest. The preserved legends are selected legends, being part of a body of sacred writings which omit, of course, a great deal that had no reference to orthodox religion. If they include Joseph's dream of the sun, moon, and stars, it is only because these gods were later said to have made obeisance to him.

Now, the father-in-law of Moses was a priest, the

Arabian "priest of Midian." He is represented as a Yahwe-worshipper, and as giving to Moses the advice that he should set elders or captains over the people—inspiring the first piece of legislation.

For scholars, the most important figure in the story of the wilderness, next to Moses himself, is that of this hill priest. The suspicion is not to be dismissed—it amounts to a high probability—that in the beginning he must have had a greater *rôle*. As the figure of Moses grew, it is likely that his diminished. Even the little that is left of him shows Jethro (or Reuel) to have been Moses's elder and counsellor, and speaks of his son Hobab as Moses's guide in the journey. The significance of these things for the opinion that Yahwism had been an Arabian cult is evident; and it must be added that in the thirteenth century B.C. Musri is known to have been a state of some importance, by no means desert (its works of irrigation can still be traced), and therefore a region in which new cultures may have developed.

If, later, in the Promised Land, there were memories of a real Moses, already becoming an unreal one, a wonder-worker and a prophet, there were memories also of a more ancient worship than he had espoused. Yahwe-worship was strongest in Judæa, not among those tribes of Israel proper, the so-called Rachel tribes, who seem to have come out of Egypt with their symbol of a brazen serpent; and the Judean tribes were Musrites. They included not only the tribes whose mythical ancestors were Reuben, Judah, Simeon, and Levi, but the Jerahmeelites (David's friends at Ziklag), the men of Caleb, the Kenites (Hobab was a Kenite), the

Kenizzites and some Edomites, all of whom came from the same important region. In other words, some tribe of Judea, which had worshipped the hill-god in Musri, was so influential there that it carried north these fellow-worshippers.

It did so in a movement separate from that of the Israelites, and earlier than theirs. This is even stated; but the significance of the fact was not seen until the position of the sacred hill in Musri had been established. It was doubly hidden. It was hidden last by the displacement of this hill, but first of all by the one-sided legends of the Israelitish tribe of Joseph. For, under Joshua, this tribe became in Canaan the most important, and gave to the whole confederation of tribes their basis of legendary thought—the story of Joseph and his brethren, sons in a mythical family, and the story of Moses. The Judean origin of the worship was practically forgotten, in spite of the fact that Moses was said to have first heard the voice of Yahwe when shepherding Jethro's flocks. Yet there was also the mention of a Musrite centre in the stories of Abram, Hagar, and Ishmael; there were the names of many Levites derived from this region; and there was the ancient story of Jacob and Esau, the rival brothers, which is a tribal legend about neighbour peoples (Esau is the hero of Edom) who had lived side by side in Musri and nowhere else. Other evidence is abundant.

That centre of the old Abram lore is the most important point in all the stories of the wilderness. It is no other than Kadesh, the place from which the spies were despatched, and the first attempt was made to take the Land of Promise.

Located fifty miles to the south of Beersheba, Kadesh is not wilderness, but a large oasis among the hills. There is the desert of Sin about it, where all is dry and barren except in spring ; but Kadesh is even to this day, in the absence of cultivation, a fertile area. Other watered tracts lie near. Here and hereabouts those tribes who are figured as elder brothers must have lived, with Horeb on the horizon ; and if the Rachel tribes came out of Egypt they found them there.

Now, when the wilderness story as we have it is analysed with reference to this centre, one sees it to be altogether unhistorical and mistaken. In the late priestly version Kadesh is the last stage of forty years' wanderings. In the earlier version adopted by the Deuteronomists it is the starting-point of those wanderings. But in the first legend rolls of which anything remains it is the immediate goal of the Israelites and permanent centre of events.

Strange ! If Kadesh was a permanent centre, what wanderings can there have been ? Once more we are obliged to see the origin of a great misrepresentation in what the critics call deuteronomistic revision. This had no respect for facts. It will be remembered that the doctrine of the Yahwist priests in face of foreign aggression was that the helplessness of Israel was due to infidelity to the god. They made the facts of history fit with this conviction, being quite sure that facts which did not fit with it were no facts, but pestilent perversions and suppressions of fact. Yahwe had punished, and always would punish, national disobedience to the laws they administered ; and by

national disobedience they meant principally the disobedience of rulers. It has been noted that their record of comparatively recent kings was a series of misrepresentations that gave effect to this view.

How were they sure to regard the old legends of a delay at Kadesh—a delay so prolonged that the leader had died of old age before the sacred ark led his people to victory? The case, it is true, was difficult. There had been visible disobedience on the people's part; Moses's rule being represented as a struggle with followers who required continual exhibitions of magic. But this hardly accounted for the premature end of Moses. There must, they would argue, have been some disobedience on his own part. They seem to have found it in his high words with Yahwe when informed that the attempt to enter the Promised Land would be followed by tribulations. This probably is what came to be known as "the sin of Moses"; he had, in effect, refused to lead such a troublesome people any longer. But, whatever view they took of his conduct, their zeal intensified the picture of that strange delay; they made it consist in wanderings, and turned the people back into waste places on the borders of Edom. Thus bad began, but worse remained behind. Their kernel of the unauthentic Pentateuch was hardly formed when the Exile occurred, leaving another body of priests to shape or to adopt another account of things, by which the wanderings were extended far south, and rounded up where they had been said to begin.

Both accounts are circumstantial marvellously.

The last, indeed, contains forty place-names, to correspond with the traditional forty years, and nicely arranged with the false idea that Sinai was elsewhere than in Musri. It is most reasonable to assume that the list of halting-places was adopted from that body of edifying literature called midrash which the times produced. Their honesty was probably just as free of alloy as that of good people who, until recent years, believed that God had inspired the magician priest of the Pentateuch to write every word of it.

What, then, seems to have happened actually at Kadesh? Two things are clear: first, that the Israelites renewed their allegiance to the hill-god, for, when they appeared in Canaan later, they had the magical ark in which he was supposed to travel; and, second, that something prevented the Israelites and the Musrites from making war together.

We are not without indications of what this something may have been. They appear in the stories of quarrels between Moses and Aaron on the one part, and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram on the other. For there are two stories here, that of Korah being one (post-exilic), and that of Dathan and Abiram its more significant precursor. This is how it happens that a company of rebels who have been already swallowed up by the open earth remain to be devoured by fire. When the earliest passages are taken out from the jumble they tell of a revolt led by two Reubenites against the claim of Moses to supremacy—a revolt so important that 250 “princes of the congregation” are said to have taken part in it.

Dathan and Abiram, summoned to worship under his authority, refuse to come up. They say that he has not led them into the Land of Promise, and yet presumes to make himself a prince over all of them. Moses protests, "I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them"; and then, as the story has it, he works another miracle, or Yahwe works it for him. As they stand "in the door of their tents, they and their wives, and their sons, and their little children," these Reubenites are engulfed with all that belongs to them. Superstition makes legend picturesque. At first it had been said, perhaps, that they were swallowed up by the desert; that is, after being expelled the camp. The truth is likely to be that, after a revolt so malcontent, men at least withdrew from the unhappy leader.

It is plain, on the face of the whole narrative of exodus and conquest, that Moses had much ado to make his supremacy good, and probable that he failed with respect both to Reuben, Levi, and the other "older" tribes. It is plain, also, that the victories of Joshua, his successor, reconciled all the tribes at last in Canaan to his name and fame.

There was once a roll called "The Wars of Yahwe." It was compiled soon after the time of Solomon, then superseded and lost. What truer light, if any, it may have thrown upon the first migratory movements we can only guess; but, even in the confused account of these wars which remains, the fact stands out that Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah began the struggle. They attacked the south, with some successes and some reverses, and there made good their footing, though not on . . .



the best lands. The first attack had failed, and we may take it as probable that the revolt of the 250 princes is correctly said to have occurred then ; but the Reubenites and other old inhabitants of Musri held on, it appears. The Israelites for their part made a flanking movement a generation later ; that is to say, their appearance under Joshua was not in south Canaan at all, but on the east, from the further side of Jordan.

Of one thing more we may be certain : the breach looked so important in the eyes of a later generation that only a miracle could account for Moses having continued to lead. Its importance lay in the fact that these "princes of the congregation" were fighting feudal lords, like the men who killed Becket, or like the Italian dukes of the Middle Ages, or the German Grafschaften. The scale of things may have been smaller, but the system of government was much the same ; and anciently any one of such nobles might have become a king-god.

This is why it was necessary, in the circumstances, that Yahwe should "make a new thing," and consign them to Sheol without that honourable burial which entitled the dead to ancestor worship, and even to honour among each other in the land of shades.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE REAL MOSES

Is there a personality behind the Moses legend, and is it realizable? Can we form any idea of the kind of man Moses must have been?

It would be interesting to do so, because of the immense figure made by the imaginary Moses, and the hold it still has upon imagination. But let the difficulty be modestly kept in mind. It is as if priests in the time of Sir John Oldcastle, the Lollard, had been the first to set down a tradition of Peter the Hermit, who lived 400 years earlier; as if what they wrote were hidden in a very much augmented story of our own day; and as if, 2,300 years hence, a similar attempt were to be made by scholars in Japan. They would have to be satisfied first of all, if possible, that there had been such a man as Peter the Hermit; and, again, it is as if they would have to say: "We can find no contemporary evidence of him; but, as there were crusades undoubtedly, there must have been a man who first advocated them effectively." Let this be kept in mind. It is the case of Moses when all allowances have been made not only for superstition and dogmatic zeal, but for ignorance that the past was unlike the post-exilic present.

The theory that he may have been a myth is weak. It is put forward cautiously by those who

say that there is no sufficient evidence of a captivity of Jews in Egypt, or of his connection with it.

They think that he may be a personified tribe, and have to suppose that a union of this Moses tribe with others took place at Kadesh long before the date assigned to the Exodus. This sort of thing—the personification of tribes and other communities—has often happened. Free popular tradition does not think about masses of men in the long run, it thinks about persons; and anything that has happened to a tribe may be said to have happened to its unknown founder, who gave it his name. So he begins to acquire a personality that never belonged to him; a mythical figure looms up. But if Moses was such a figure, so were all the other actors in his story, who must also represent tribes or families; and there is no record of any such tribes or families having existed—except that of Korah, whom we know to be an unreal figure because he was added to the story late.

Besides, the myth, if it were one altogether, would be unlike others, because it would be one about masses of men after all. There are real tribes in it, which we begin to distinguish as soon as they enter Canaan. They are so real that their mythical ancestors are not in it instead of them. We are on the fringe of the historic period, if not of sober history. Even if it were some day proved beyond question that the story of Egypt was a folk-tale without foundation in that country—an altered tale of Musri or Misri, which common report had taken to be Misraim (Egypt)—it would not follow that there had been no real Moses.

It comes to this. Where there is no writing,

memories of peoples die while single figures of men remain to be amplified, or may even be created ; so that, at any time when memories of peoples remain, however erroneous they may be, the single figures contained in them are likely to have been real, however altered. Moses, then, was probably a man, and not a personified tribe.

Now, it is true that there can never have been a literary portrait of the real Moses. There can only have been a traditional notion of him. And, if the earliest fragments of writing in our possession date from 300 or 400 years after his time, it may be asked, How can scholars do more than recover the notion contained in those fragments, amplified and strangely altered as it must have been? How can we get at anything more than a picture of the minds of those who lived in that later time, when the tribes had been reunited, and Saul and David and Solomon had reigned, and the new kingdom had been divided again, and Yahwism was fighting against rival worships on behalf of its own god and its own marvellous heroes?

These would be unanswerable questions if we were concerned with facts very strictly. But we are concerned rather with what was behind facts ; and if those fragments of writing enable the course of actual events to be traced approximately, and show the hero to have behaved in the midst of events in a natural and convincing way, we may be sure, at any rate, that to this extent the notion was a sound one. If, in his behaviour, there are circumstances which it was not to the interest of superstitious respect, dogmatism, or patriotic

feeling to invent, they will help us to perceive a real Moses with some confidence and sympathy. What is known of the remote times in which he lived may enable us, then, if not to paint a portrait, at least to sketch an impression.

Of course it will be very unlike the chiaroscuro which has imposed upon the ages. Of all the elaborate laws and rules imputed to him, all the ceremonies he is described as taking part in, all the contents of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, nothing ethical is as old as the earliest legends. These tell only of a few simple rites and customs, survivals from the age of magic, such as we may assume that Jethro and other priests of Musri observed. Moses cannot have been the author of such customs and rites, for they are common. Then, we are happily able to disregard conflicting statements about his character and temper, such as the priestly representation, on the one hand, that he broke certain stone tablets and addressed his people, "Hear now, ye rebels," and the earlier one, on the other, that "the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth"—though instead of "meek" we ought to read "downtrodden," the Hebrew word being one that was used of the common people oppressed by their rulers. Each author idealized in his own way. The Moses of Sinai and Jewish imagination fades like the baseless fabric of a vision, of which it is much if a wrack be left behind.

But, as the vision dissolves, this wrack appears. It consists of fragments older even than the legend-rolls of Jerusalem and Samaria, fragments of

narrative which contain those ancient rites and customs.

Did the priests of the two kingdoms, who began the collection of such material after the reign of Solomon, find them anywhere in written form? It is possible, though not likely. We have treated it as a negligible conjecture. But, prior to that reign, there had been a period of Israelitish predominance when the centre of religious thought was in that geographical centre of Palestine, the land of Ephraim. Bethel and other sanctuaries existed, centres of tradition. Some scraps of writing may have been made there. If these are they, or passages of them, it would seem that a slender attempt was made in those days to account for the origin of the race. They may bring us within a century or two of Moses' time.

True, it is impossible to restore the narrative they gave, because it has been broken and disordered. To return to a metaphor once before used, the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are a huge mosaic, which has been from time to time re-arranged, and which is a narrative no longer, but a confused design. Broken bits of the original narrative are found, but their order is for ever lost. Among this mosaic's formless reduplications they remain embedded in a sort of deuteronomistic cement which has been used to hold the design together. They are not valueless, however. They have just the significance of arrow-heads in a tumulus.

The two most instructive ones are Exodus xxxiii, 7-11, and xxxiv, 10-28.

In the first the magician priest is said to have

had a tent at some distance outside the camp. There he went to speak with Yahwe face to face, "as a man speaks to his friend"; and meanwhile the people in the camp, who watched him go, stood waiting till they saw the smoke of the sacred fire like a pillar. On seeing it, they were accustomed to do reverence. But "everyone which sought the Lord"—that is to say, an oracle—went out to the tent. The mistranslation of its name, "tabernacle of the congregation," is not alone responsible for the idea that this was a place of public worship. A description written 600 years later makes it one, and makes Sabbath worship appear to have been an institution of that time, which it was not.

In the second piece of narrative there are the commands and customs which Israel was said to have had before the Conquest; and they require public worship only thrice a year—on the occasion of ancient feasts that were observed by many (probably by all) of the peoples of nearer Asia and the Mediterranean littoral—feasts held in the spring, at the reaping and sacrifice of first-fruits, and at the end of harvest. Other very ancient injunctions, connected with belief in the beneficial practice of magic, are not to keep any part of a sacrifice till morning and not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk. It will be seen that there is already a provision for redeeming first-born sons from sacrifice, but this may have been, and probably was, inserted later. For sacrificial occasions there is to be an altar of earth or unhewn blocks of stone; and there are to be no steps leading up to it, for reasons of decency.

We have to think of a Moses clad, not in flowing vestments, but in a simple loincloth. It was, indeed, the flint age in Musri. Long afterwards flint knives only were allowed to be used for religious purposes.

In the description of what happened at the sacred hill little is primitive. But it appears that such a hill was taboo. Any man not a priest who had passed certain bounds would have been stoned to death. The priests ascended after special ceremonies; and the representation is that they did so in thunderstorms, when the god was evidently present. Yahwe comes to Moses "in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever."

Another antique fragment of the narrative is that which relates how the Israelites had been received by the Musrites. Exodus xviii, 12, says: "And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for Yahwe; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to hold the sacred meal before Yahwe." This describes a ceremony of initiation.

With such scanty colours for a background the impressionist picture of the hero may still be traced.

If there is truth in the legend of an Exodus from Egypt—and we have found that there seem to have been real memories of that country—he was, if not of the blood royal, at all events a man of such strength of character as a leader must have. When young, he may well have killed an oppressor, and stood by Jethro's daughters in a dispute about a desert well. By Jethro he must have been



initiated as a Yahwist priest ; and, in the prime of life, he may have undertaken to lead the contemplated raid on Canaan, and to obtain for it a reinforcement of Israelites. The Egyptian mission would naturally be difficult, and would take time. When he came to Kadesh, a trusted chief and deliverer, one sees him hopefully acclaimed ; and then these swarthy Arab tribes eat the sacred meal of blood brotherhood together, and the new comers are armed. However small the reinforcement, there is not a food supply to admit of delays. The oracle is consulted, the northern movement begins presently.

A horde of fighting men in primitive array, half naked under the tropical sun, and armed with javelins, shields of hide, and flint-edged wooden swords, sets forward over the hills ; its captains being its feudal chiefs. There is a strong enemy to be encountered, as the raiders know ; but their magician with his potent staff goes with them. For we may be sure that the story of Moses' old age, misplaced in the mosaic, does not tell of an isolated case in which his hand was raised to encourage and inflame the fight. But they are routed. Whether in one battle or in a campaign, they are routed so grievously that, for the Israelites at least, the entrance to their Promised Land is put off for a generation.

It is in these circumstances that the legends do seem to reflect some natural consequences. There is the quarrel which has been noticed, and there is a very striking account of the mood of Moses, when his following of beaten and disheartened men complained of hardships, and talked of turning

back to Egypt. He goes out to the tent of oracles, and they watch him. The high words he is said to have used with the god cannot, of course, be actual; but they finely dramatize a natural emotion which he may have been known to feel. Only a recollection of this mood can, as one would think, have inspired the legend-makers to put in his mouth language so appropriate; for it represents him as angrily sick of a disastrous enterprise, repudiating responsibility for it, and desiring death.

"Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant?" he demands. "Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say to me: 'Carry them in thy bosom'? If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight, that I may not see my wretchedness."

No doubt there is high imaginative quality in this legendary lore; and once, at least, it almost rises to an equal height of dramatic representation elsewhere—in the story of Elijah. Is it quite likely that such an outburst should have been invented out of nothing?

Its dislocated place in the mosaic (Numbers xi) makes it even seem extravagant; for the words are said to have been weakly uttered because the people were ungrateful for their new food, manna, and longed for flesh. It was put there, evidently, to account for a partial delegation of authority to the Israelitish "princes," which follows. Some delegation there may well have been, and hardly without such a mood on the part of a discredited leader.

There was much more than a spartan and

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uncertain life to account for murmuring, and more is told elsewhere. There was more than murmuring to break the spirit of Moses, resolute and eager as it must have been. Afterwards he may have even seemed a "downtrodden" man.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE DEATH OF MOSES

DID Moses actually live on? Can he have shown a changed demeanour in fact, or had he "found favour" in the sight of Yahwe? The question is one that cannot be answered. There is only material for conjecture.

But all the stories of his longer life are accretions on the original legend. No value attaches to them. He is represented to have seen the wars resumed with some successes under Joshua, his acolyte, and to have gazed upon the Promised Land from the summit of Mount Pisgah; but it has been shown beyond question that the whole account of Joshua's wars is unhistorical, while the story of Mount Pisgah was probably inserted by the deuteronomists, and was certainly, at the end of their last book, amplified by those editors who rounded off the Pentateuch. It is only certain that the worship of the hill-god was not in the end abandoned by the Israelites, though it remained strongest among the Musrite tribes. They cast no blame on Yahwe. In the end, at all events, they took the word of Yahwe's oracle that he was displeased with them; and as time passed, and courage failed them to make war again, the oracle could only seem more truthful.

The question as to Moses' after life cannot be

answered because, when every particle of the pentateuchal mosaic has been scrutinized, furbished up, its age and sense approximately determined, its old place found or guessed at, we are no wiser on this point. Either the original legend said nothing as to what became of Moses, or it contained a story which, as the centuries went by, was thrown aside as an ill-fitting fragment. That there was no statement about the end of such a hero, man or myth, is in the highest degree improbable. That there was one which did not accord with the fable of punitive wanderings is very possible ; and, if there was, it must have represented that he died in Musri.

The conjecture is plausibly made that the picture of his discouragement in that dramatic request, "Kill me out of hand," may have been part of it.

Three centuries later, while the story of Moses was yet in its simplest form, a prophet appeared who was almost to obscure him for a time in the popular regard. Horeb being still the abode of Yahwe, Elijah, too, saw the god there ; and after his death the legend concerning him drew upon the same sources. It relates that, after wishing once to die, and after dividing Jordan as Moses had divided the Red Sea, he was caught away by Yahwe in a fiery chariot. Did the Elijah legend deprive that of Moses of its closing scene? There are counterparts in the discouraged mood and the magic : was there once a counterpart in the illustrious and mystic end?

It will always be suspected.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE WAR LEADER

WHAT a child loves best in the Bible is its most romantic passages. It is clear that these were equally loved by the early Jews. Joshua, commanding the sun to stand still in the firmament, seems in young eyes a greater hero than Moses. Joshua's is the more impressive magic.

It is probable, indeed, that in popular estimation Joshua was once the more important figure. That of Moses was given significance and authority in later times as the law and the priestly ceremonies were ascribed more and more elaborately to his inauguration. But Joshua had been a successful war leader of the tribes. He must always have been renowned. From the confused, undated recollections of a gradual migration and conquest his name stood out in wonder-stories of Jericho and Ai, the strongest cities taken from the Canaanites; and so, as legend grew, the whole conquest came to be considered as his work.

However, Joshua's arrest of the sun is not unique. The feat had been common in the days of nature worship and nature magic. Of these things there were still traces in the region, both stories and practices; for Samson is clearly a solar hero, and there are hills and villages that, like his birthplace, have solar names. The feat

was, and is, imagined easily by undeveloped races, although we can hardly conceive their simplicity. Once more it is useful to turn to *The Golden Bough*, in which there is a collection of modern instances found among savages :—

In a pass of the Peruvian Andes stand two ruined towers on opposite hills. Iron hooks are clamped into their walls for the purpose of stretching a net from one tower to the other. The net is intended to catch the sun. On a small hill in Fiji grew a patch of reeds, and travellers who feared to be belated used to tie the tops of a handful of reeds together to prevent the sun from going down. As to this my late friend the Rev. Lorimer Fison wrote to me : "I asked an old man the meaning of the practice, and he said, 'We used to think the Sun would see us and know we wanted him not to go down till we got past on our way home again.'" But perhaps the original intention was to entangle the Sun in the reeds, just as the Peruvians try to catch him in the net. Stories of men who have caught the Sun in a noose are widely spread. When the Sun is going southward in the autumn, and sinking lower and lower in the Arctic sky, the Esquimaux of Iglulik play the game of cat's cradle in order to catch him in the meshes of the string and so prevent his disappearance. On the contrary, when the Sun is moving northward in the spring, they play the game of cup and ball to hasten his return. In New Guinea, when a Motu man is hunting or travelling late in the afternoon and fears to be overtaken by darkness, he will sometimes take a piece of string, loop it, and look through the loop at the Sun. Then he pulls the loop into a knot and says : "Wait until we get home, and we will give you the fat of a pig." In a similar case a Motumotu man says : "Sun, do not be in a hurry ; just wait until I get to the end." And the Sun waits.

There is nothing strange in the fact that Joshua's command is more imposing, which it is because

more turns upon it, and because the passage is poetry taken from an early song-book. This only shows that the form in which we have the story was given to it by a people more developed than the Motumotu, though not more sceptical.

But in another way Joshua is unique ; he makes the walls of Jericho fall by blowing sacred trumpets and shouting. It is one of the most elaborate and spectacular tales of natural magic that have come down to us, and there is no other hero of the past to whom such a feat is attributed. Indeed, it is a feat so finely dramatic that one credulous modern admirer has tried to save it as a fact of history by suggesting that the sound touched a particularly weak spot in the masonry, just as one note of the violin has been known to break a lamp shade. He thinks it possible they knew more about science than we in these degenerate days deem likely. Such apologies crumble like the walls in the story. If Joshua did know science and the walls so well, it is certain that the wonder would never be forgotten by anyone who told how Jericho was taken ; yet this wonder is not in the oldest version of the story. It is deuteronomistic and Judean, like the fierce representation that he put all his enemies to the sword.

The early wars were fierce enough, no doubt, but possibly not more fierce than Cromwell's war in Ireland. It is some comfort to learn that the circumstantial account of cold-blooded massacres belongs to far later times than Joshua's own, and to note the perfect probability of those negotiations and alliances which he is said, on the other hand, to have admitted. How much the feats of Joshua



were heightened by the deuteronomists, critics cannot really determine. They only see that they were heightened. For example, the oldest version, an Israelitish one, had an account of the miraculous dividing of Jordan, like the Moses legend of the Red Sea ; but the resemblance between the two was not so close as the deuteronomists made it. They not only did not suspect what journalists call a "double," but in their innocence they tried to make it perfect.

Those who care to glance at the confusion made by incorporating two versions may note that at chap. iii, 17, the crossing of the Jordan is completed, yet that at iv, 11, the narrative has only reached the same point. In iv, 8, the stones are erected at Gilgal ; in the next verse they are set up in the bed of the river. It will be evident upon reflection, too, that the account in chap. viii of how an altar was built should have come after the completed conquest, if, in fact, Joshua lived to see that, and if he himself accomplished it and did all the other acts imputed to him.

But we are not dealing with facts at all. There are shreds of the early version left that show things to have been otherwise represented in it. After the capture of Ai the separate tribes got to work ; there was no universal conqueror. More than this, the establishment of cities of refuge was not an administrative measure of those unsettled times, but came later, when the priestly law-givers could quietly set up their civil system. Our Book of Joshua is an example of the tendency to ascribe to one man, one generation, and one stroke of arms what in fact was the result of a long succession

of events ; and the fanciful history is marked at every point by that religious bias which, as we have seen, makes the Book of Kings a travesty. It must be read with a clear idea of the narrow and passionate civilization that produced it.

It is, from beginning to end, an *ex post facto* romance based on legendary fragments of the slenderest value. Those who elaborated these dramatic details of a dim past did so with the freedom of a modern novelist, but their conscientiousness was not exercised in making the historical romance probable and fact-like ; it simply sought to show, for the edification of good patriots and pious worshippers, that Yahwe, who was still their war-god and once made promises to the patriarchs, had carried through his purpose marvellously. Thus it begins with a speech of divine command to the legendary leader, and ends with a *résumé* from the patriarchs down. Properly, it is part of the Pentateuch. Scholars regard it as such, see that it has been such, and speak of the Hexateuch instead ; recognizing that what was once a narrative, unbroken, lost its final chapter when the amplification of the first five chapters by late hands had made them more important as law (Torah) than they were as narrative. The Pentateuch was Torah, Joshua not ; and Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy made his story seem an anti-climax in the eyes of law-makers.

What does this matter? Only that it is one sign of the lateness—the post-exilic lateness—of all the wonderful code ascribed to Moses, all the ceremonies and most of the laws and usages which appear in these opening pages of the Bible.

The critical method pursued is sure, though difficult. It may be understood at once if we again construct an English parallel. Suppose we had an Elizabethan "history" of the days of King Alfred which made him give out very complete laws and regulations for the monasteries. Suppose that, continuing, it enabled us to see what we know, that monasteries were not established on a great scale in this country till the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The "history" of such laws and regulations would be clearly discredited by known facts. What, therefore, scholars have done with the Old Testament is first to separate narrative and laws, then to reduce the former to its certainties, and in the light of these to determine when the laws were made.

The first steps were plain. The so-called history in the Books of Judges and Samuel, and even the real history disentangled from it, are inconsistent with such laws. So is part of that in the Book of Kings. Therefore such laws cannot have been known when those books were last edited, still less when they began to be written. They were not known, indeed, to any prophet before Jeremiah, and he quotes only from Deuteronomy. Much has been said already to show the striking results of this historical inquiry.

But, as to the war leader Joshua, his fame, at all events, was nowise dimmed by the deuteronomists; it only had to be overshadowed by that of Moses. Just how little of it he deserved, or how much, it is not possible to say. There are no established facts about him, not even the fact that he was a man before the ancient songwriters

of Israel compiled their Iliad. The date of that "Book of Jasher" from which his poetic spell-words are quoted is as late as the ninth century B.C., though it must have contained songs of earlier times; and the question whether he was most probably a real person or a dramatized clan-name can be decided only by the view one takes of this other. Which is the more likely, that in three hundred years a clan (that of Joseph) came to be personified, or that there was one war leader so strong as to be remembered for that time in folk-lore?

Most people would make one answer if it were not the fact that personification was common in Israelitish poetry. This very songbook's title, translated, is "The Book of the Righteous One" or "Brave One," meaning Israel itself. But, even so, it would be stupid to doubt that an heroic age had its heroes. Joshua seems to have been thought the greatest, unless we give the palm to Samson.

The interest of his story as it has come down to us is not, after all, the basis of fact that may be contained in it, but the colour given to it by ages of a romantic patriotism.

## CHAPTER XX

### STONES

THE stones that Joshua was said to have set up at Gilgal were a sacred circle, precisely such a circle as the Druids made with stones in our own country. "Circle" is the meaning of the word *gilgal*.

That they were twelve in number, and represented the twelve tribes, is an explanation afterwards imagined. Twelve tribes had not then been recognized; the legendary Jacob had not yet twelve sons. That this circle was sacred to the god afterwards worshipped is a gloss also. The unnumbered and thorough alterations made by scribes in the early stories have in no respect obscured more painstakingly than in this matter of holy stones the truth about those early superstitions from which their own developed. It was inevitable that, as new and larger superstitions gained acceptance, the first and simpler ones should be dropped; but, in regard to stones, there were special reasons for suppressing traces—namely, that many sacred stones were shaped idols, and that all of them had been anciently thought to be the abodes of deity.

Nowadays this is common knowledge. Men are nowhere shocked by it, and no longer attempt to magnify the authority and stretch out the age

of their faiths by ascribing them to prehistoric heroes.

Almost everywhere the minds of savages, unassisted by science, have been daunted by strange stones; and it would seem that no savage race in the world has at any time yielded to that instinctive awe more ingenuously than the early Semites. The Phœnician and the primal Arab civilizations—which were as savage in this and other respects as Juju worship is to-day—have left rich vestiges of the obsession. Undeveloped man believes meteorites and curious rocks or boulders to be alive—to be inhabited by divine spirits. The belief was clearly shared by the colonizing Jews, and, in spite of change and all the labours of editors, the proofs of this remain for discerning eyes in the Bible.

By the time of King Josiah and the deuteronomists, there was such a different Yahwism that no one thought of Yahwism as a growth. A crusade against idolatry was preached, and it accomplished a wholesale destruction of circles and standing stones west of the Jordan. But, as Gilgal, Bethel ("the stone in which the numen dwells"), Shechem, and some other ancient sites had chanced to continue sacred in the view of orthodox Judaism, these were spared; and the deuteronomists, while preserving legends relating to them, generally changed the word by which a holy stone had been popular, because it had an idolatrous meaning. A region was despoiled of most of its antiquities. Round about it, far and wide, such stones and circles of stones may be seen in plenty to this day.

It is plain on the showing of the Old Testament that, down to the eighth century, standing stones were the unchallenged sanctuaries of Yahwe. Hosea says that they are indispensable in places of worship. Jacob is fabled to have discovered the holy stone at Bethel; the primitive Moses to have raised twelve stones at the foot of Horeb; Joshua to have formed the most famous *gilgal*; the prophet Elijah to have set up a circle on Carmel. As there were no Ten Commandments till the ark had long been lost, we are driven to guess that what it contained may have been meteorites; for the deity was thought to dwell in that simple box, as other deities or their symbols were in the arks of the Egyptians.

The word substituted for the idolatrous one is oftenest "altar," which simply means in the Hebrew a slaughter-place. There was nothing scandalous in reading that such and such a divine hero set up a slaughter-place. What seems probable is that altars—rude stones laid down for sacrifice—had been formed in front of standing stones while these were still "alive," and that they remained sometimes when the standing stones were either condemned or thrown down.

But, originally, there was only in each place the standing stone itself, with a pit at the foot of it, in which the blood of the slaughtered beast sank and stagnated while a feast was made of the roasted flesh. It was customary to smear the stone with blood and fat, and on occasion to cast into the pit silver and gold ornaments. Some of these have been found. Such stones were adorned at times with wreaths, bound with fillets, or swathed with

garments elaborately, all to please the indwelling spirit. Unhewn at first, they came to be rudely fashioned with the likeness of human heads and members, and so to be idols literally. The later conception of Yahwe could have no sympathy with such simplicities.

To think of them in connection with the magic happenings, the butcheries, and the many treacherous deeds of pre-exilic days is not difficult. Indeed, it is only after a reconstruction of that age in its true aspect that the record can be read intelligently. What remains to appal the student is the fact that this is a record such as had been revised, completed, and finally canonized with a purpose ostensibly and passionately religious.



## CHAPTER XXI

### SAMSON AND SAMUEL

How much of the ferocity of war was due to Yahwism—that is to say, to a national faith in Yahwe as war god, and how much the faith in question was due to national ferocity, is a speculative and idle inquiry. Rational minds must regard the complexion of both as merely characteristic. Not all the warrior heroes were religious ones, nor all the religious heroes warriors. But the exceptions only throw into relief the general rule that a religious patriotism made faith and feats of arms inseparable.

This makes the exceptions interesting. There are conspicuous ones in Samson and Samuel, who may be roughly taken to begin and end respectively the long period between the early wars and the first choice of a king—the period of the “judges” or deliverers. For the sake of the contrast between these two figures, exceptions less conspicuous may be passed over.

It is true that the whole Book of Judges has been made up of local legends that gain most of their religious significance from the process. The story of Ehud was found at Gilgal, that of Gideon and Abimelech at Ophrah and Shechem, that of Jephthah at Mizpeh. Samson was a hero of the south, Deborah and Barak were figures from the folklore

of the north. The scribe or scribes who first assembled them in one narrative of national glory thought only of recording so many daring deeds. There was no concern to show that Israel was oppressed when she forgot Yahwe, and delivered when she repented. There was not even a chronology; it seemed unnecessary to write in, as later hands did, fanciful periods of eighty, forty, and twenty years to make up a total of 480—twelve generations of forty—between the Exodus and the founding of Solomon's temple. And we may be sure that even the minor heroes of this locality and that were not all supposed to be equally pious. Strip their exploits of the deuteronomistic context, and this is evident.

It is worth while to glance at some of these minor heroes, because they do give us an idea of the social and religious conditions preceding the establishment of the kingdom. Romantic as they are, in a saga-book that omits the detail of less fortunate ones and amplifies their deeds, one gathers something of their true history, or rather of the period in which they mistily moved and had their being. They seem to have corresponded to the Roman consuls. They were called *sophetim*, as the same kind of rulers were called *sufetes* in Carthage and the Punic cities. In the first instance they were clan chiefs, and to the end most of them were nothing more; but Jephthah and Gideon may be said to have become petty kings.

There is Deborah, the first prophetess after Miriam. The ode that celebrates her triumph over the Canaanites is not only one of the oldest, but one of the greatest, Hebrew poems that have

come down to us. Its text is injured grievously, but many critics think it bears evidence of being the work of a poet contemporaneous with this Boadicea of the tribe of Issachar.

There is Gideon, a yeoman hero whose imputed stratagem of the torches and broken pitchers was, in fact, that of another man of valour and guile, Jerubbaal, with whose legend his has been confused and mingled. There is the left-handed assassin Ehud.

And there is Jephthah, of whom the story is such a compost that critics are not agreed about him, but whose sacrifice of his daughter may not be dismissed as an incredible act of cruelty. Parallel sacrifices are named elsewhere, and told of in Arabian tradition; and it says nothing to the contrary that the periodic mourning of the Israelitish women for her death at Mizpah was connected there with a ceremony that had once commemorated the death of a virgin goddess. There was similar mourning at Laodicea in the times of Porphyry and Pausanias for the goddess Tammuz. The sacrificial victim was a stag there; it had once been a maid.

But of these old-world heroes Samson is at once the greatest and the least religious. His strength was pure magic; what gave it him was that singular notion of the virtue in hair to which reference has once been made. At the first blush one may wonder at the apparent adoption of a wonder-story from a rival cultus, and then at the deuteronomistic failure to improve it. Its adoption is possible enough—nay, very probable. It is a folk story, and may well have done duty in earlier

forms for other heroes. There may be mythical elements in it. But, as it has the same moral as the story of the Tree of Knowledge, and as Delilah was no doubt a temple harlot of the Philistines (or so imagined), it is plain that there was reason why it should be preserved.

The fighting spirit of the men of Judea must have been nourished in them by this tale of a Danite Herakles. Who would not like to think of David's youth kindled by it? It may have been. Only, if David heard it, the tale was told of other enemies than the Philistines, who had too recently appeared in the land to be material of folklore. It was even told of some hero not a Danite, not a member of one of the tribes oppressed by these invaders. For the Samson of whom we read, if there was ever such a single-handed champion, however modest, must have been, roughly speaking, Saul's contemporary.

But these "ifs" are too presumptuous. There is no reason to believe that Saul, a real personage, had ever such an ally, or even an ally whose actual deeds can have been enlarged to such mythical proportions. No; we are dealing with a fictional tale of later times than his, incorporated in the same Book of Judges that stores the soberer details of his own career. Properly, it should be no part of that book at all; Samson was not a "judge." But it was found extant some three centuries after the Philistine wars, and, improbable or not, it was included in the national "history." When one says that it may have been a tale known to David, the only meaning is that such folk-tales never come to life suddenly, but are

found as legacies of unknown age ; that he may have heard the heroic rudiments of it in another form and another setting. What one does not mean, even conjecturally, is that he had heard of any such hero slaughtering Philistines.

Yet the conjecture hazarded is not far-fetched at all. There is the clear possibility of an ancient myth, and the hero may some day be identified from clay tablets that now lie *perdu*. He may prove to be such a solar hero as Gilgamesh. For "solar" is the meaning of the name Samson, and in the region connected with him there was apparently an old Canaanitish shrine for sun worship. Or some of his exploits may be derived from nature myths, treated as fairy tales by the plastic popular imagination. The stories of the foxes and of his riddle suggest this.

Take the tale, however, as it was found and incorporated. The unshaven locks of the hero and his dedication from birth to a revengeful *rôle* go to show, as its moral does, that in Judea, where it had this form, there was an ascetic movement hostile especially to the old sexual magic ; and by some critics it has been reasonably surmised that this movement gained a standing comparable with that of the school of Yahwist prophets. It was, they think, the forcing bed of the singular sect of Nazirites, famous later. Samson was its demigod. But, unlike the Nazirite vow of post-exilic times, his was one of revenge simply, as in an Arab story. He is inspired by no religious or patriotic purpose, but by a personal motive, "the one passion in him"—to quote the late Dr. Robertson Smith—"which is stronger than the love of

women." So, in the eighth century about, he seems to have been imagined ; and in this popular hero of vast strength and sarcastic humour one sees a reflection of the dawn of that puritan morality which, among the early Jews, was at least as remarkable as their religious bias.

Samuel stands in a striking contrast. The strong man was a fiction of the people, the seer a fiction of the earliest school of literary prophets. To one figure the growth of legend gave simple traits of romance, to the other an infinity of authoritative detail. The results are respectively a plain fable and a confused fabrication of history.

As in the case of Moses, it is astonishing to find how meagre was the earliest account of the last judge in Israel. This is contained in chapters ix, x, xiii, and xiv of the first of the books bearing his name, and does not even include the whole of these chapters. The rest of the two long books, and things told of him in the Chronicles, are all later strata—so much later and so full of inconsistencies as to be manifestly unhistoric. Who and what was he, then? What smaller part did he play in fact than we have been taught to imagine? Is he, or Moses, the more insubstantial figure?

One might say Samuel ; but the little told of him in that earliest account has a certain unmistakable value. He was a seer, or clairvoyant, in Zuph. It was because he had been a seer, and as such reputable, that Samuel seemed to the northern school of prophets an important predecessor, and that pious legends gathered round him.

For our own minds, the difference between a seer and a prophet may not be so great as the

difference between witch doctor and statesman, but is like it. They had the same relative place in different stages of civilization. While there was yet in Israel no truly national religious priesthood, a class of priestly seers might be feed, like Samuel, for oracles on petty personal matters. Such a priesthood being once established, oracles took a larger scope and prophetism arose.

But no line can be drawn ; it is nowhere possible to say, "Up to this point all was fortune-telling, beyond it all was inspiration." This the scribes knew, and attempted to draw none. Recall for a moment the account of Micaiah's prophecy before King Jehoshaphat, when he alone, out of four hundred prophets said to have been gathered about that monarch, had the courage to tell what proved to be the unpalatable truth about a contemplated battle. The King believed that somewhere among them the word of Yahwe might be found, yet clearly thought the mass of them impostors ; and this was the position as long as prophecy continued. But Micaiah did not blame his colleagues. He said that they, too, spoke under the influence of a spirit proceeding from Yahwe, but it was "a lying spirit sent to deceive." The distinction made was not between seer and prophet, but between false and true prognosticator. The memory of Samuel was therefore honoured.

Yet he was a seer only. There can never have been a time when any ruler of Israel, or any "higher prophet," would have told a man for a quarter shekel of silver where his lost asses were.

Like the witch of Endor, Samuel was a seer of such local repute as to be unknown to Saul. He

was consulted at the instance of Saul's servant, who had heard of him. How is this compatible with the later statement that "Samuel ruled Israel all the days of his life"? And of what value is the inserted explanation of a scribe: "Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of Yahwe, he said, 'Come, let us go to the seer'; for he that is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer"? The scribe assumed that they differed in name only. As we shall have to show, they differed in kind as well as in pretensions.

Critical examination of the text discovers that, in the story of Samuel as it comes down to us, the most picturesque and important passages are an incrustation of the centuries in which that ignorant note on its old stem was thought necessary. They began to be added in the time of those first literary prophets, of Amos and Hosea, two or three hundred years after Samuel's death; and the process went on just as long, and with just the same effect and motive, as in the case of the Moses legend. To it are due the idyll of Samuel's childhood and youth, the epic of the Amalekites and of Agag hewn in pieces, the victory over Philistines, the pictures of a stern and obstinate mastery over Saul, the anointing of David, Samuel's appearance at the head of a prophetic school of dervishes in Ramah, his ordaining of genealogies—everything, in short, that makes him look like a great historic figure.

When these things are subtracted, the one material fact remaining is that it may have been he who, according to the fragment of earlier legend, put into Saul's mind the ambition to be king.



## CHAPTER XXII

### SAUL, DAVID, SOLOMON

WITH Solomon comes the brief golden age of Jewish history. The spirit of the legends changes. The piety of editors has not been able greatly to desecularize them, or even to feel jealous of their truly Oriental exuberance. They contain fewer supernatural elements. We are within touch of historic times, and the substratum of truth can be oftener recognized.

Yet, just because this was a golden age, looked back upon with regret and pride as long as literature could gild it, the truth has been extravagantly adorned. We are on no surer ground than where the fanciful detail warns us there is little.

Nor can it be said that this was a golden age in the sense that the common people dwelt free and happy in their land of milk and honey. Solomon was no warrior king ; but he came to the throne of a country established on a feudal system, by which the general population lived for its tribal chiefs, and riches passed from men whose toil created them to men who ruled. The glory of Solomon had been procured by measureless bloodshed in the past, and was marked by ruthless despotism.

The comparative liberty of earlier times had been lost when David's military genius and Joab's made a standing army powerful. A congeries of

clans became a kingdom at this expense, and now, as under the Pharaohs, there was forced labour. "The king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel, and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses.....And Solomon had three score and ten thousand that bare burdens, and four score thousand hewers in the mountains; beside the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred." The overseer of this *corvée* was the hated Adoniram. Prefects of districts were charged with the duty of keeping up a constant supply of Court luxuries as well as with the provision of all this labour. Doubtless there were armed men and the whip to enforce it.

Tracing the rise of this imperial state, the student notes that Saul, king of the Benjamites, and David, the first king of all Israel, came to power in the beginning as defenders of the people against foreign aggression. The Amalekites and the Philistines had overrun the most fertile lands. It is necessary, therefore, to disentangle fact from legend in the stories of these champions.

It seems likely that the portrait of Saul has been darkened for two reasons—that Samuel was said to have blamed him (for clemency), and that he was jealous of the popular favourite David. Critics are doubtful how much of the moodiness of his temper to believe in. On the other hand, David's religiosity is almost wholly an imputed thing, the imagination of posterity. Not one of the psalms can be ascribed to him with confidence; for only one or two of them is it so much as claimed, nowadays, that he may have composed them—if he

was indeed a poet. One has to say "*if* he was a poet" because the earlier legends speak of him only as a musician. The broad fact about the Jewish religion that would deny plausibility to his extreme repentances, even if the psalms were not known to be later literature, is that this religion had in his time no value for the personal conscience, but was still a belief in the war-god of a nation only. The king bore the brunt. That he was "a man after God's own heart" means only that he was one in whom Yahwe, the god of Israel, found the qualities of a leader of his people; and even this description is that of a late scribe.

To see him as he was in fact—first the adventurous freebooter of Adullam, then the able and public-spirited war-leader winning his sure way to the throne, finally an old king grown slack amid wives and concubines, plagued with family quarrels, held up by a general of his bodyguard—to see him in any of these phases clearly, one must sacrifice picturesque and amiable touches. But David the saint has never agreed well with David the man. His true importance does not suffer.

David does not seem to have been of distinguished origin. The ancestry connecting him with great figures of the past was invented long after his time, like some modern ones for the Heralds' College. So, as we have noted, was the story of Samuel's consecration of him in boyhood. But so, too, was the whole conception of a shepherd stripping brought marvellously to the notice of Saul. Alas for "David and Goliath," delight of our uncritical days! In the second Book of Samuel (chaps. xxi and xxiii) there is included an old roll

of honour, from which it appears that the actual slayer of Goliath was one of David's men of war, there named Elhanan.

Our translators have been puzzled by it. Before the name Goliath they have inserted "the brother of." Why not, seeing that they knew nothing of the lateness of the David legend, and actually found in Chronicles a mention of this brother's name? There it is given as Lahmi. But Chronicles is a post-exilic work, in which there is no sign whatever that the author had access to special sources. The old roll stands. It seems this author had himself been puzzled; for his invention of Lahmi, an unknown proper name, was in the highest degree ingenious. He got at it by suspecting some previous scribe of careless copying, and what he did was to leave out the word "beth-hallahmi" after Elhanan's name, meaning Bethlehemite, and to insert "Lahmi the brother of" before Goliath's. How should he know that the David legend was not old enough?

No, the old roll stands: "And there was again a battle in Gob [? Gath] with the Philistines, where Elhanan of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite, slew Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam."

Such a staff might well beget a folk-tale. If one wishes to see how folk-tales grow, here is the very seed of one. A fine touch of exaggeration, natural in a list of David's mighty men, was all that stuck in the popular fancy—to make men tell of giants. But the Philistines were ordinary men; their monuments and those of Egypt on which they appear enable us to recognize the garb, armour,

and racial type of a people of Asia Minor and the Ægean, active in war and trade. It did not occur to simple minds in days to come that the supremacy of this people was due to better weapons and protective harness than the Israelites at first possessed; and it was David, not his warriors, of whom men thought when details were forgotten. Goliath was remembered—how should he fail to be?—but not Elhanan. The stripling called by Samuel from his sheep took precedence, since Yahwe gave him strength, and all he needed was a sheep-boy's weapon. An army paralysed with fear stood by, his mighty men among them. No wonder Saul was jealous!

In the dry light of reason it is plain enough that there was other cause for jealousy on Saul's part. Not yet indeed; and so we are not obliged to believe that a king accused of undue clemency to enemies could hurl his javelin at a pretty minstrel. But jealous he must have been of the freebooter.

Captain of a band of 400 outlaws, David from his fort of Adullam—"cave" is a mistranslation—established an irregular and wise protection over a whole region that paid him tribute. True, Adullam was outside the land of Judah. True, the Amalekites, who learned to fear and avoid his light-footed mountaineers there, were Saul's enemies no less than his. But Saul cannot have seen the rise of a rival without misgivings.

What was the course of things between them? Some facts are fairly clear. In the beginning there must have been a sort of alliance, for David seems to have formed a friendship with the king's

son and aspired to the hand of his daughter. When his local rule had grown there would be nothing strange in this, for Saul himself was only a local ruler, though a king. The story of Jonathan is legend merely, but not mythical. However romantic, however unlikely the compact by which the heir apparent made a gift of his prospects charmingly to a friend, that story must have been suggested by public facts. Even if the friendship did not begin in boyhood, it was there, and a time came when Saul frowned upon it. Why? What natural cause had he? There is none discernible but the fact that David thought it politic to make some league with Achish, king of Gath. No doubt that may have been consequence, not cause, as it is represented; but the whole legendary structure that makes it follow a feat of Jack the Giant-killer, anointed to be king, is swept away and leaves us to conjecture. Was he at Court so young at all? It must be doubted. If not, perhaps the royal jealousy first showed itself in the slaughter of those priests to whom David resorted in his mountain fastnesses, and who, as a conflicting story tells, gave him the sword of Goliath for a mascot.

But what do the facts matter? One prefers these legends infinitely to all that can be known; and, so long as they are not taken seriously, no harm is done by them. That of Jonathan and David is a beautiful tale of comradeship, "passing the love of women," and perfectly consistent, at all events, with the temper of a hero capable of loving. Besides, the elegy on Saul and Jonathan is one of the few things that may be his; it comes from the ancient Book of Jasher. Why not think it so?

We have to surrender not only the Book of Psalms, but even the song of David's triumph in the Book of Samuel, and the poetic "last words": let that fragment be respected. If the injurious tale of Bathsheba be true, broadly, so may this of Jonathan be. It is only needful to strip away the religious embellishments that make his childhood marvellous and his manhood edifying. These are glosses.

As for the facts of his rise to power and early kingship, they show him to have been an honest and vigorous ruler. That he alone broke the power of the Philistines is improbable, in the light of all that is known of that people. They had to deal also with Egyptian and North Arabian foes. But when, a vassal freeing himself, he advanced after Saul's death from his old strongholds to Zion, defeated Saul's remaining son, joined north to south in war on neighbouring peoples, and so for the first time consolidated all the tribes, David must have enjoyed the fame of Napoleon after the peace of Campo Formio.

The scale of things was smaller; he created nothing in the nature of a world empire. Nor was the new nation conscious of itself so proudly as to forget at once the tribal rivalries, or to look with unqualified favour on his military statesmanship. The attempted census, a measure aiming at something like conscription, was resisted by the priesthood as a menace to popular liberties. But at Jerusalem, which old stronghold of the borderlands between Judah and Israel he made his capital, the king was well and wisely placed with a bodyguard too small to alarm his nobles; and it

is plain that there was little tyrannous in his disposition.

David's sway was comparatively mild ; and it is a disillusionment, as great as any announced by scholarship, that holiness had nothing to do with this.

He was indeed superstitious, and so the patriot priesthood kept a check on his ambitions. They had nothing to complain of in him. As he had scourged in Yahwe's name Amalek, Moab, Ammon, and Edom, not sparing, so he refrained at Yahwe's bidding from the census and from other acts. Yet the mildness was partly amiability, partly luxury. It is not extraordinary that he built a palace and kept a harem, repaying himself for arduous days. These were proper acts of an Eastern potentate. But, if the story of Tamar's wrongs be true, one sees a monarch slack with his own household, and understands the tragedy of Absalom. That prince had cause to think ill of his father. How far the grievance of his sister moved him, and how far his rebellion may have been a protest against the influence of Bathsheba, paramount in the harem, nothing shows ; but in David's grief at his death one divines the plight of a king whose will, in those days, was without authority for his fighting men.

King Solomon has been still more strangely idealized. That splendid figure of romance, Solon, Sardanapalus, Croesus all in one, shrinks to a petty and mischievous despot.

So far was he from being a wise ruler that the disruption of the kingdom of David is directly traceable to his vainglorious oppressions. It provoked the rebellion of Jeroboam, who, though



beaten, lived to assert his claim to the north. Solomon's fame as a sagacious and learned man rests upon no foundation that can be discovered, save a tradition put into writing by remote posterity. There must, presumably, have been some ground for it, if only such as there was for James I.'s renown for scholarship. But it is posthumous and very hollow. The Book of Proverbs, tested either by its conception of life, its ethics, its religious attitude, its linguistic character, or the social conditions reflected by it, belongs to the post-exilic period of Jewish philosophy. The earlier story of a judgment between two mothers who claimed one child appears to be an old folk-tale, for it is paralleled in Buddhist lore.

On the other hand, it is necessary to dismiss the picture of an immense seraglio, and to relieve this king of the authorship of the so-called Song of Solomon, that collection of Syrian marriage songs bolted whole by early Christianity as mystical and sacred. He was more ostentatious than his father, but possibly not much more uxorious.

As to Solomon's power, it is by no means certain that he enlarged the kingdom, or was a perfectly independent sovereign. If he commanded much wealth, it was due to exactions as well as to a foreign commerce that may or may not have been important, but is not authenticated. No political writer of modern times can admire him; for he came to the throne by a *coup d'état*, established himself by three important murders and the deposition of a high priest, and, as has been said, built his palace and the temple with forced labour.

The opportunity for wise kingship was unique.

He might have reconciled the tribes, and laid, perhaps, the sound foundation of a different history from that which the Jewish race has to look back upon. He did neither. It may be asked, indeed, with some excusable wonder, why such a monarch escaped the censure of the deuteronomists, to become a cynosure. How did a golden age so brief and fruitless come to be enriched so fancifully and so freely? There is but one explanation—that Solomon built the first temple.

That pious labour bore fruit in the early idealization of his conduct as a king, and guarded him to the end against detraction.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### GODS AND THE WAR-GOD

AT this time, when a king could begin by making his own high priest, there was such free thought among the conquering and the conquered peoples, or rather such free want of thought, that one would have found the most picturesque variety of superstitions.

Some fuller account of these is needed than the casual mentions they have had. It was the years of settlement that blended them in the singular texture of Yahwism, to be largely superseded by it, and so to make way with Yahwism itself for the notion of one supreme deity, creator of the universe. The Bible is full of them. Some are decried by its authors, but many more accepted. They have not all, however, been recognized as superstitions by Christianity. The error of those authors, that of casting back into a previous age without discrimination the religious thought of their own, has been constantly repeated. It is still a little bold to write of the god of David without a capital letter.

Yet there is nothing plainer than the way in which that god came to be considered as omnipotent in the cosmos. Before those authors could attribute such a view of him to David, or Job, or the later prophets, a new rivalry of beliefs had to lift Yahwism to it.

The worship of the hosts of heaven was introduced to Palestine from Assyria in the seventh century B.C. It was formidable. Yahwism came to grips with it in a struggle that seemed for a while to be doubtful. To the hosts of heaven—the Sun, the Moon, and the stars—King Manasseh built altars in the two courts of the Temple itself, and at one of its doors there were stabled those white horses that every day, drawing the chariots of the Sun, went out to greet his rising from the eastern hill-tops. For the hosts of heaven were greater than the earthly god of a nation. It was not that they made a loftier and larger appeal to imagination than Yahwe did, for that appeal was far less personal and friendly than his had always been. It was that, undeniably, the Assyrians were stronger than Israel. For two generations their armies had everywhere won victories; Samaria had been taken, Judah ravaged, countless prisoners deported and replaced. It was forty years more before the old faith raised its head. Then Josiah tried, but in vain, to suppress this alien worship with the strong hand.

What overcame it was not his efforts, but the bold thought of the prophets of this time that their own god reigned in heaven as well as in Israel. They overcame the Sun, Moon, and stars by exalting Yahwe above them, as in Micaiah's vision of that divinity sitting on a throne with the hosts of heaven on his right hand and his left. The hill-god, the war-god of their forefathers, was henceforth ruler of the skies, and so of all the world known to them.

Even so, he was still an avenger, not a heavenly

father of mankind. Nor was there any enlightenment to raise a doubt of the earlier superstitions that are preserved even by post-exilic editors.

Something has been said about sacred stones and sooth-saying. A whole chapter, or indeed a volume, might be written on methods of divination. It does not appear that the Hebrews knew the Greek and Roman way of finding omens in the flight and the cries of birds, or in the entrails of slaughtered animals; but they practised many other such devices. There was divination by rods and arrows. The rods may have been drawn like lots from a bag, the arrows were shaken abroad at a cross roads when the way was in doubt. There are allusions to these methods in Hosea iv, 12, and Ezekiel xxi, 23. The sacred ephod, used in consulting Yahwe, was a loincloth (afterwards a coat) with a pouch containing two stones of diverse colour, the urim and thummin; and by means of it the inquirer put some alternative question. In Saul's case the alternative was: "If this fault be in me or in Jonathan my son, give urim; and if it be in thy people Israel, give thummim." The use of a fleece by Gideon was another device of the same sort, more popular than priestly.

To necromancy—the quest of oracles from the dead—the priesthood was more or less inimical, for it posed at last as a rival cult; yet even this held its own down to a late period. There was a whole race of augurs like the Witch of Endor, professing with hollow voices to hold converse with the underworld; the first ventriloquists. For the dead were not yet in hell or heaven. They

dwelt in a shadowy and deep kingdom, gathered to their fathers, living a kind of half-life. And Yahwe was not the god of the dead, he was a god of the living. The dead, a nation too, were not his. They were the ancestors. The rival cult was a surviving form of that ancestor worship which, it is clear, must have been practised long before there was a god of Israel, and which continued to disregard him.

But, while the temple priests had no concern at any time with necromancy, and in the end made war upon it, they believed in divination by dreams.

No dream could be neglected wisely. Its right interpretation told what was to come. The early legends of northern Israel especially are tinged with dream lore, and some of the apparitions they relate ought to be understood as seen in sleep, like Abimelech's. Without a dream Jacob would not part from Laban. He is said to have raised the first cromlech after another, about the limestone terraces at Bethel. Joseph's dreams presaged his fame. There was a meaning beneath Gideon's comic dream of the cake of barley bread that knocked a tent down. The firm belief in such meanings is avowed by Elihu in Job; and what use of them the late romance of Daniel makes, with its reflection of Babylonish customs, everyone remembers well. The Babylonians, if not the Jews, had dream books. By these, by a thousand natural accidents, by oracles procured each day, they directed, if pious, the minutest concerns of life; for the follies of to-day were part of the wisdom of these ancients.

Yahwism accepted more than dreams. Like

every other new religion in a land, it turned to account many beliefs and customs that it could not kill or did not find discordant. One of the most curious cases was that of the scapegoat. It goes with all the significant mentions of holy wells, rocks, trees, and wild waste places to prove the prevalence of a primitive nature worship. This evidence is abundant. The peculiar ordinances of Leviticus are full of it, and seem to have given a late and formal sanction to numberless old usages grown new.

What was it that led to the official use of a goat to carry away the sins of a nation? Near Jerusalem, at a place now called Bet-hudedun, there is a rocky chasm that had or still has its demon. His name was Azazel. When the two goats had been brought before Yahwe, and one chosen for him, the high priest laid the nation's sin upon the other, which, as the Targum shows, was to be taken to the cliff and pushed over—an offering to the demon. Now, it is known that, in the orthodox religion down to the third or fourth century, there was little knowledge of either angels or demons. They largely came from Persia. Contact with that country, and a similar conquest of ideas to that which had made Yahwe master of the star spirits, account for Michael, Gabriel, and the rest, who can be seen shaping themselves in the current literature. So much is clear. But why, in this unique instance of Azazel, did Judaism consent to another sacrifice than Yahwe claimed?

The sole possible answer is that sacrifices to the earth spirits had been made at this place by the common people from time immemorial, and

now were reinforced by the foreign influence. Yahwists allowed that these wild spirits were angels—but fallen angels. To commit a load of sin to one of them was to blacken him and make him subject at the same time.

The need for such a compromise, says Dr. Cheyne, must have been urgent. He finds this folk-lore in the contemporary marriage songs of the Canticles, translating one obscure passage: "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the fairy hosts and by the tree spirits." But its persistence was not remarkable. To this day, in Palestine, the locust or careb tree is regarded as possessed. Much less is it remarkable to find sacred trees in the old stories of Abram, Abimelech, Joshua, Deborah, and Gideon—trees treated by those heroes as important—or to see David take an omen from the sound of marching in the tops of mulberry trees.

A great part of priestly statesmanship must have been given to compromise. The ancient festivals of the seasons, in which a war-god had no sort of interest, were annexed because they diverted the people's thoughts to other gods. When Leviticus forbids a corner of the wheat-field to be reaped, it is because a corner has always been left to the grain spirit. He it was, and not Yahwe, who had originally claimed the first sheaf of the harvest and the first cakes made of the new grain. The trees to be left uncircumcized—that is to say, not pruned—are treated just as they must have been by sympathetic magic. This, too, accounts for the prohibition of mixed plantations in Deuteronomy. So long as men and all living things were imagined



as mysteriously related, mixed plantations must have been thought as bad as mixed marriages.

The whole enormous ritual of clean and unclean things is derived from the same primitive school of thought as was the hill-god himself—a puissant and appalling earth spirit. It has been amplified, not merely adopted. For this conception of a divine essence in things, capable of being transferred like magnetism, was common to all barbaric religion. Why might certain animals be eaten and others not? It was because, at one time or another, by some cult or another, they had been thought to have or not to have divine qualities: either idea served to set up either practice, as people feared to offend such animals or wished to absorb their divine strength.

The case of the scapegoat, then, is interesting, but not specially important. The origins of Yahwism were such that it matters little whether a moment came when, under stress of some sort, a potent superstition at outs with it was accommodated and admitted formally.

There is nowhere in the Scriptures, for example, a direction that wells venerated by the Canaanites should be treated as holy; but some wells were. At the Feast of Tabernacles water was drawn from Siloam and carried, amid a blare of trumpets, into the temple precincts through a gate called for this reason the water-gate; and there it was poured upon the altar "that the rains of the year may be blessed to you." Centuries later, under another civilization, the pool of Siloam was famous still and salutary. An angel ruled it. He was the descendant of a far older well spirit, and the pouring of

water upon the altar had perpetuated a rain-charm.

Things went otherwise with ancestor worship, for other reasons. Yahwism had easily superseded it; for, once the god of Horeb had become the war-god of a nation, he was vastly more important than any tribal ancestor could be. Yahwism could be indifferent to it. The teraphim or household gods, images of the ancestors, became images of Yahwe, and then disappeared in the general havoc made of idols. But they had been recognized at first with as little jealousy as the hero Moses was credited with sorcery, or Yahwe transferred the services of the magician Balaam to his own people. The strong ancestral feeling of an aristocracy of "elders" preserved both teraphim and the practice of divination, doubtless. Hosea joins teraphim and ephods with sacrifices and massebah as essentials in the observance of religious rites, and by Isaiah the diviner is named with the warrior, the judge, the prophet, and the elder among the mainstays of the nation. The teraphim in David's house is spoken of as if it were a thing to be found in every Israelitish home of importance.

But the legend of Balaam's ass may be momentous. It may represent the first dramatic clash between the worship of Yahwe and the Canaanitish worship of the Elohim. True, its very primitive air has induced scholars to think the talking ass no better than a decoration derived from older folklore; they class it with the talking serpent of Genesis, the talking horse of Homer, and various Babylonian beasts. And it would be enough to cite such parallels. At one time men believed

that animals might speak. Do they not speak for children still in countless fairy stories? Yet it is perfectly certain that, in the time of Balaam and in Canaan, men had not emerged from the state of mind in which they could be duped by such an expert as he was. There is the enchanting possibility that Balaam, accustomed to summon voices from the underworld, found no difficulty in giving a voice to his ass.

What was the position? One way or another, if he had resolved to be on the winning side, Balaam must procure an oracle. He was pressed hard. Accompanied by the king's men, he had been led out with instructions to curse the conquering army. The story goes that his ass proved unmanageable. She first turned off into a field, then in a lane crushed Balaam's foot against a wall, finally fell with him. He was beating her for the third time when she protested. All this appears intelligible. The duologue between the magician and his unfortunate beast, heard by his escort, is not more extraordinary than the trick played with a donkey by the ventriloquist Maccabe upon an Irish peasant.

What Balaam professed to see, and implied that his ass had seen first, was not Yahwe, nor any messenger of that divinity. Yahwe seen by Balaam's ass or Balaam would not have impressed the Moabites. The spectre imagined was that of one of their own gods, saying: "Go with them, but speak only that which I shall put into thy mouth." And, when he blessed Israel, it was the surrender of the old gods of the land to the new comer.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ELIJAH'S MANTLE

NEARLY all the prophetic literature of the Bible is in a broad sense legendary.

Even when not supplemented for new editions, it must be so termed because the records of what was denounced, inculcated, and foretold had been generally set down, not by the prophets themselves, but by successors; and these were commonly poets, who wrote when events alleged to have been foreseen had come to pass. A very large book would have to be written in order to show this in detail, or to give something like a true picture of the succession of remarkable men, leaders of Jewish thought, whose political instinct, and finally their ethics, were thus glorified. A sketch must serve.

It is inexact to say that the seer became the prophet. He was a forerunner, but so was another sort of dealer in credulity—the dancing dervish who worked himself into a frenzy, as dervishes do still among the Arabs. In the days of magic all dancing was pious, like David's.

Seers who were priests had so much to do when the priesthood became a national institution that, naturally, they ceased very soon to give private oracles. Besides, their cult grew too important for that. Then, like the members of all priest-

hoods, they became much interested in ritual and doctrine, and conservative. If they interfered in politics, it was rarely as rebels or reformers. Prophecy was, however, rebellious and bold, and so it could hardly appear in the priestly order, save in the absence of a king and an establishment during the Exile. The true predecessor of the prophet was the free nonconformist dancing dervish, or—to give him his Hebrew name—the *nabi*. This kind of mystic is first mentioned in the story of Saul. A company of *nebiim* comes down dancing from the *gilgal*, or “high place,” with lyre, tambourine, flute, and harp, and is joined in the sacred dance by Saul. A late addition to the story says that, in his ecstasy, Saul stripped off all his clothes and lay naked a day and a night. Evidently a *nabi* might sometimes do that. And the comment was—a mocking comment seems to have been possible—“Is Saul also among the prophets?”

It is an error of posterity that represents Samuel as the head of this irregular company, or one like it.

A seer (*roeh*) was a diviner of one sort or another. A *nabi* practised neither consultations with the dead nor any other form of divination, but was believed, in the frenzy or the exhaustion induced by his dance, to be directly inspired by some divine spirit. When the wild chorea had reached its climax, he fell to the ground and sometimes raved. The spirit was then said to have come upon him. He might either be inarticulate or not. If his thoughts had run much upon a particular subject before he lashed himself into this frenzy, they might then pour themselves out. It was so

different a thing from divination that seers and dervishes never worked in partnership.

The Arab dervishes do not commonly prophesy. But they may in stormy times. Those of Saul's day, when the idea of Yahwe and his people was taking hold, must have begun to utter warnings and detractions—for the Philistines were a scourge.

That idea continued to occupy the *nebiim*, there is no doubt; but ten kings had yet to reign and die before a *nabi* grew famous enough to have stories told about him. This was Elijah, the first recognized prophet of the sacred books. It would seem a far cry to such a man even if dates were unknown; but as we see him he is dignified by the narrative, which makes him a meteoric and almost a solitary figure, and relates many wonders of him. The narrative, in its original parts, shows what might be believed of such a man about sixty years after his time. It has been supplemented, confused a little with the story of Elisha, and broken about by various hands; but there is enough of it unspoiled to rank him among the true *nebiim*. The prophets were still spoken of as "madmen"; the epithet is even applied by Jehu's companions to a disciple of Elisha's school. They saw their own visions and gave their own oracles. But it seems they were already less demented, less vertiginous; for, if we are to trust an account which, by its acceptance of the golden ox as a symbol of Yahwe, is seen to be that of Elisha's immediate following, Elijah's fame in his lifetime rested not on any hysteria, but on courageous acts of the sober will.

He was an exceptional figure, of course, and

exceptional in this very particular. If not, it would have been impossible for Jehoshaphat to talk as he did about the *nebiim* in general. They would all have been feared. And instead of madmen they would have been called wise.

By force of character, and because there was a feeling that they were wise sometimes at any rate, Elijah spoke boldly to Ahab in behalf of the god menaced by Ahab's marriage with a Tyrian princess. No book of his prophecies has been preserved; he probably made none of importance but those in the narrative; yet he was clearly the first of the line of patriotic prophets, men of a certain grandiose and compelling genius. His mantle, cast upon Elisha, descended to strong moralists and agitators. The development that followed with Amos—not a *nabi*, but a rational countryman—was decisive; and to these men's gradual and bold excogitation we owe monotheism, though little of what is now religion. They were all unorthodox in their day. While they imagined, thought, and dared, paying for that temerity, the priesthood multiplied laws and ritual. Some of them came to be statesmen. Although there is not a perfectly authentic account of one of them, or of his utterances, they alone and what their thought engendered are important in the Jewish religion.

The strangest fact revealing itself to critical study is that the Jews never guessed their true importance. But how should they? They had no means of measuring it. Ignorant of the future, they could not estimate effects; ignorant of history, they never knew that thought develops. Instead

of the prophets' leadership, seldom recognized before their deaths, what the Jews admired was their predictions if and when events were said to confirm these. Foreknowledge was all that proved such teachers wise, or, as people would have said, not false prophets. This, and not their thought, was the marvellous thing. And once persuaded of a prophet's foreknowledge, the scribes appear to have retouched the poetic records of it freely, to make them accurate ; believing that they ought to have been so.

Hence an imposture which, until our knowledge of history enabled the prophets to be seen in the times when they lived, obscured their real genius ; an imposture, indeed, that still obscures it except for students.

But, in the case of Elijah and Elisha, there was only among their admirers that lack of rational sense with which we have been dealing all along. Marvellous deeds, not marvellous words, are told of them. We are at the very period when, so far as can be told, the early legends were first committed to writing or began to be so conserved ; and Elijah was dead long enough to seem no less marvellous than heroes who had lived before him.

Nay, it is certain that he then seemed to be the principal figure. Those who wrote of him were as near to his time as the author of the second gospel to that of Jesus, and must have thought of him as the true founder, if not of Yahwism, at all events of its national stability. The account of his contest with the prophets of Baal and their patroness Jezebel stands for something real. These writers



were so near to the time that, when there is nothing in the story to fire their imaginations or to express their bias, they transmit events as vividly and with as much realism as any recorder of the Icelandic sagas. Read, for instance, the story of Jehu's rebellion. It is rudely convincing.

That they were *nebiim* is clear, however. The disciples of Elisha, companies of prophets whom he established at various centres, were such undoubtedly ; and the writers were either of their number or contemporary with them. What was written must be what the *nebiim* narrated. We say that they were such undoubtedly because the evidence as to Elisha himself is textual. In 2 Kings, iii, there is this passage about him : "(And Elisha said), 'And now bring me a minstrel.' In fact, so it was, that as often as a minstrel played the hand of Yahwe came upon him."

## CHAPTER XXV

### JOB AND DANIEL

BESIDES the great marriage poem known as Canticles—a prosaic title for it—there are in the Old Testament two distinctive books having little in common with the rest, and standing out as great conscious works of imagination. There is no important legend attaching to either Job or Daniel, unless it be the notion that those figures of purposeful romance were real. But this makes it necessary to set them in a true light.

The books, as will be divined by every reader who has come so far, are products of a time subsequent to the great period of prophecy. Job worships a god of the entire cosmos, and Daniel was imagined long after the hundred years of expatriation.

Each book looks like the work of a single author. The Book of Job, however, proves under critical examination to be no such homogeneous output of one mind as *God and the Ant* or *Paradise Lost*. It was not always a confused parable, but had a clear intention ; and, as a work of art, was finer in form than it now is, if not so fine in matter. The Book of Daniel, too, has been enlarged (in apocrypha) by inserting the legend of Susannah, that of Bel and the Dragon, and the Song of the Three Hebrew Children.

A new school of thought, another way of looking at life than that of either priests, prophets, or amatory poets, appears to have helped the development of Jewish literature under foreign sway. It arose in the sixth century, and flourished for five hundred years. It is known as the school of the sages or "wise men," and its culture made possible the lofty and bold speculation of the Book of Job.

In other words, the Jews had no longer to rely upon unlettered *nebiim* and a besotted priesthood for their religious ideas, but might derive such ideas from three or four civilizations. From the Persians they adopted the notion of demons and angels; from the Egyptians and Greeks the conception of ethical immortality, and therefore of a heaven and a hell; from the Greeks also a touch of philosophy. The sages were such men as first made use of these ideas. Passages in the Pentateuch and the pseudo-historical books, as well as in the books of prophecy, show that the prophets were hostile to them. But as the sages, too, were Yahwe worshippers, their influence counted. It was based on a sort of worldly sense. In the centuries during which they taught, the question for them as well as for the prophets was no longer, "Why does Yahwe's people suffer?" but came to be, "Why do good men suffer and bad men prosper?" This is the question asked from several points of view in the Book of Job, and left unanswered.

In the Proverbs, which are the fruit of their simplest thought, one sees that they had assumed prosperity to be the sure reward of goodness, which they called wisdom. They were disillusioned.

What followed is immensely interesting. After Job came Ecclesiastes, frankly confessing despair. Neither the nation nor the righteous man was protected by Yahwe; all was vanity and vexation of spirit. In other words, the government of the world was neither moral nor, as they thought, just. But, as the idea of another life reached them, these sages, who were men so circumstanced as to have no hope whatever of making the world a better place, came to the conclusion that its injustices must be compensated after death. Fortunately, they also looked upon life as a moral training; holding to their admiration of goodness through all disappointments.

The Book of Job, therefore, is a very vital poem, representing a stage in this great development of men's ideas. Pessimism has not yet extinguished the human belief in justice for a time, and the poem is a magnificent, though confused and inconclusive, plea for justice.

The Christian legend about it, mistaking such hope as it declares, is that the author of Job foresaw the crucifixion of Jesus. In chap. xix of the Authorized Version there occurs the famous passage beginning, "I know that my redeemer liveth." Though "redeemer" is not spelled with a capital letter, it has been widely taken as if it were. But the poet, in his claim to justice, was thinking of a kind of redemption well known to him, the "redeemer" being the commonest figure in Jewish law. This person was anyone who bought freedom for a slave, or whose duty it was to avenge a murder; and Job, who stands for Israel in her adversity no less than the ideal righteous man, declares that he

expects El Shaddai to avenge or to free him. A more exact translation of the context was attempted by the late Dr. Cheyne, Oriel Professor of Holy Scripture at Oxford, as follows :—

As for me, I know it—my Avenger lives,  
And (lying) in the dust I shall receive his pledge ;  
Shaddai will bring to pass my desire,  
And as my justifier I shall see God.

When ye say, " We will pursue him like a hart,  
And will satisfy ourselves with his (lacerated) flesh,"  
Have fear for yourselves because of your words,  
For those are words of iniquity.

But who is El Shaddai? The answer adds weight to this explanation. It will be remembered that the words appear to mean " God the Destroyer," and they occur continually in this poem, whereas it says little of Yahwe. Whatever their actual meaning may have been—and there are several conjectures—it is significant that such a writer did not make much use of a name discredited by the misfortunes of the nation. He, like the prophets of Yahwe by this time, believed in a god who was more than the old god of Israel, for he praises a divine creator of all things. But the notion of divine love had not yet dawned.

Nor is there the least reason to suppose that a man named Job once lived in the land of Uz, to merit a world renown for patience. On the folk-story of Eäbani (for " Job " is properly pronounced Iyyob), a Babylonian god who suffered from the same skin disease, a sage appears to have built his parable. He it was who invested Job with patience, a patience resembling that of the unhappy nation.

It escapes no one's attention that this ideal patience does not prevent the hero from saying

impatient things of El Shaddai or to him. That is an inconsistency which seems pardonable, but not quite explicable. However, it is easily explained. The impatient sayings were not written by the same hand as the story. This, contained in a prose prologue and epilogue, is plain and quaint; the speeches are in verse, all of which is literary and much sublime. Not only that inconsistency, but a stranger one, proves the shared authorship. After reaching, at Job's expense, the conclusion that a man should "serve God for naught," the book ends by restoring Job's prosperity, and says he has spoken rightly of the deity. In the prose story, too, sacrifices are essential to piety, but in the poem they do not count. What seems to have happened is that a speculative poet, finding the story made to his hand as Shakespeare found his plots, enlarged it nobly without too much attention to it.

Sage though he was, this genius lacked the logical faculty of those successors who threw overboard the theory that riches ought to go with righteousness or wisdom. He shook it, but did not definitely abandon it. Even those successors were unable to destroy it, and it contains a half truth still for modern ears. How should he go so far when concerned only, like the prose story-maker himself, to find some ground of patriotic hope? Patriotism, for him, had no tinge of socialism, but was only a baffled imperialism. The case of men and the case of nations appeared alike unhopeful, yet his optimism refused to cry *Vanitas vanitatum*. He looked for a "redeemer," and so he let the prologue stand.

What is more, it appears extremely reasonable to think that his work was supplemented by a still bolder poet with no more mastery. The ablest critics hold that chaps. xx-xxviii are the latter's contribution. They break its unity while touching unexpected heights. Unfortunately, dogmatic corrections have been made in them, and even substitutions; so that, as a poem of ideas, Job is one of the most bewildering books in the Bible.

Its poetic value is extraordinary, though assuredly not lessened by fine English. The Book of Daniel is a no less striking historical romance.

This book was ignorantly mistaken for a great prophecy, and so contributed to the general legend that in Palestine, long ago, there were holy men inspired specially to visualize the future. How do scholars know that the Book of Daniel is no such thing? Why do they set another value upon it, strictly literary? The case of this book merits attention, since it establishes once for all the critical method with prophetic writings, which is to find out first, if possible, when they were done, and so to estimate their worth by what is known of history.

Here is a pseudo-prophecy, which purports to have been written by its hero during the Exile, and has been supposed to predict the Christian Messiah; whereas the prophet Daniel was an imaginary figure, this romance dates only from 170-165 B.C., and it foreshadows, not the kingship of Jesus, but that Maccabean rising of which it was possibly a mainspring. After 2,000 years of wonder and awe bestowed upon this first

apocalypse, its real character transpires. By what prodigious revelation?

None, truly. Honest thought, the slow accumulation of all necessary knowledge, ingenuous and able scrutiny, have served to make things plain.

Be it said at once that the case of this book is exceptional; however important as literature, it has somewhat the aspect of a pious fraud. There is, indeed, no proof of a fraudulent mind in the author, and there has been no such mind in Christian ignorance, only a reluctance to admit the truth about it. But that was long suspected. There was a fault in scouting the suspicion, which challenged boldly the doctrine of a magical inspiration of the Bible. For one of the strongest props of that doctrine was the notion that a book mysteriously worded foretold the birth of Christ after a lapse of 600 years from the time of its authorship. If it spoke in fact of another kind of Messiah—if the hope due to it was not fulfilled, even for Christians—what might not become of prophecy? And how would even the true Messiah stand? Minds affected to magic and mystery held out against the facts as if their faith depended on these things alone.

Was it not said in the book, explicitly, that Daniel had been divinely enjoined to "shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of the end"? To ask how he had possibly secured that it should remain unread for centuries was an impiety. Did not the vision of the four beasts plainly describe the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires, as that of the strange image



did? The little horn of the fourth beast was unmistakable.

It might appear so. But the author, as ignorant of the past as any apologist, had been under the impression that there was a Medean as well as a Persian sovereignty, and his fourth beast and feet of iron and clay were Greek. He wrote under the Greek dominion. The Messiah, the "anointed one" of his imagining, was a Jewish king who should overthrow that; and the "end" he spoke of was an end of the nation's long adversities. Whoever this author may have been, he was a patriot dealing with the crushing calamities of his own time. For it was a time of the profoundest despondency. A religious edict of the tyrant Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), issued to enforce the Greek cultus throughout his dominions, had established an altar to Olympian Zeus in the sacrificial shrine of Jerusalem itself; and this profanation seemed a worse thing than even exile had been under a power that allowed perfect freedom of worship. To pious Jews it looked like the end of all things.

There was "no more any prophet"; the sages had brought another system in. There had been none for three centuries and a-half. But a long line of psalmists had kept a sad and fervent patriotism glowing, and to no purpose. Men's eyes turned back to the Exile almost with regret, remembering those famous Jews who had been Babylonian statesmen; and it was then that a man of genius produced this book of Daniel.

Its purpose was to kindle hope again. With the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt it instantly

and magnificently succeeded. Doubtless the author belonged to that school of Assideans, "pious ones," which lent recruits to Judas Maccabeus; and his literary pose is not to be judged without reference to the dire occasion for such authorship. It need not be supposed to have deceived any but the vulgar. It was proper to a political romance produced at some risk. With wonder-stories for the simple and visions for the wise, the book told, in the manner of Ezekiel and some earlier writers, of a wise Jew at the Court of Nebuchadrezzar who had foreseen the "abomination of desolation" and what should make an end of that, the apparent end of all things. This sort of literary product has been known in many countries and at all times.

Certainly the author was not unaware of its imposing force. He described past occurrences, known to all his readers, as if they had been still in the womb of time when the book was made; and, these having come to pass, the readers were bound to expect fulfilment of his added happenings. That consideration gives us a measure of the pious fraud. His own measure of it, and that of his contemporaries who understood, was not so strict at all, for this romance merely expressed their belief that the Almighty would yet arrange for the liberation of his peculiar people.

However, his successors of the synagogue canonized the book credulously and soon. Much later, the Council of Trent canonized, in the face of critics, those apocryphal additions to it which have been mentioned. What are the data now warranting denial of its prophetic inspiration?

They have been found mainly in the author's hazy knowledge of history, and are plentiful. He imagined the past too freely, and on inaccurate bases. The character of Daniel, which he found in midrash as that of a wise and righteous hero—a boy who had judged two elders and lived to fight a dragon—is nowhere traceable as that of a man who ever lived. Books of the Exile make no mention of him. The actual name of the king he is made to serve was Nebuchadrezzar, not Nebuchadnezzar, and neither Daniel nor any of the "three Hebrew children" was carried off from Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiachim; it was not until Jehoiachim had reigned eleven years that Jerusalem was sacked. Nebuchadrezzar had no son Belshazzar. In his day there was neither a Darius nor an Ahasuerus. The only Darius in history came seven reigns later; it was he who allowed the Jews to rebuild their temple, as we have seen. The famous writing on the wall cannot be interpreted by any glossary of the Babylonian language. When the author says, "Then spake the Chaldeans to the King in Aramaic," and goes on to employ it, he does not use the language of such glossaries. He uses the Aramaic of his own country. A Daniel exiled as a youth, and living abroad for seventy years or more, would not have done so. Indeed, it was not current in his country till much later. The magicians are called *kasdim*, as if that were not a general name for the ruling class in Babylonia. Finally, there are Macedonian words in a book pretending to date from a time before the Greeks were heard of.

Nor was the author ill equipped only with

knowledge of Babylonia. He did not know that in the time of the Exile there was among the Jews no thought of a future life ; no Gabriel and no Michael ; no book of Jeremiah, or of Ezekiel, or of Zechariah that Daniel could have quoted from, as Daniel quotes.

On the other hand, the actual date of this romance is determined within a few years by its many references to events of the author's own day. These leap to light as soon as the Greek instead of the Roman empire is seen to be intended in the sequel. The little horn that waxed great is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, not Herod ; there are close allusions to his origin, his marriage, his oppressions, his military operations. No mystery remains. As to the author's vision of the immediate future, on which alone he ventured, it was shrewd as a political forecast, but unfortunate in detail. He went so far as to predict that the tyrant, after a successful raid on Egypt, would meet his death suddenly in Palestine. Antiochus perished in a raid against the Persian city of Tabæ. Yet it must have seemed a point for the book's authenticity—unless the text has been corrected—that he did predict by chance the year of that relief.

There was not to be another prophet before John the Baptist.







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THE GIFT OF

*Dr. Wm. Andrew D. White*

